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The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

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Abstract

This qualitative research examines the impact on four participants' lives of having lived abroad. The data was collected from four counsellors who had been living back in the United Kingdom for at least two years. It was collected via semi-structured interviews and analysed by using the Constant Comparative Method of data collection. Analysis of the data highlighted the impact living abroad had had on participants and how they had coped with the struggle of re-entry. Participants were affected by going to live abroad and some had struggled to maintain relationships as a result of coming home. Resettlement had resulted in feelings of loss, pain and sadness which had been buried or unrecognised for what it was at the time. Participants felt like outsiders in their own country and spent some time feeling isolated. The findings from the interviews support research in this area.

Declaration

The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

Signed:

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my amazing children, Benjamin, Hannah and Katie who have not only physically lived the title of this work but also helped, inspired and encouraged me along the way; for their constant support and belief.

List of Abbreviations

BACP	British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy
TCK	Third Culture Kid
UK	United Kingdom

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the impact on relationships and families of having lived abroad. Living abroad requires a whole range of changes and adaptations to one's perspective on life. In order to give this study a framework it is necessary to have an awareness and comprehension of what is meant by culture and how this is influential on personal identity, before going on to examine culture shock, experienced in the process of moving abroad, and reverse culture shock, the focus of this study, experienced on return to the "home country".

I have a passionate and personal interest in this area due to my own experiences of living abroad and repatriating and my awareness of the impact this had on me and my family. Maxwell (2005) points out that an important advantage of basing your research topic on your own experience is motivation. McLeod (2011) also suggests the personal meaning of a research topic may be bound up with the meaning of doing research itself. I spent nine years living in Asia, having been "a trailing spouse". No amount of help and information could have prepared me for the actual reality of the move abroad. However I was at least to some extent forewarned of the shock to be expected by reading books on Culture Shock (Cooper and Cooper, 2004; Draine and Hall, 1986), and by talking to other expatriates on arrival, about these feelings. I did not feel alone or abnormal with my concerns.

My return to the United Kingdom involved no such preparation; there was no support and little compassion from family and friends. My home country felt

hostile, alien and unfamiliar. I was an outsider yet there was a definite expectation to be able to slot back in where I had left off. It felt to me as though the small village community I had been an active and important part of nine years ago now viewed us with suspicion, as foreigners. The resulting feeling was loneliness and depression but could have been attributed to reverse culture shock in reality. Returnees are expected to slot back into an old way of life which is no longer recognisable (Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2000; Pollock and Van Reken 2001). I was left feeling confused, disorientated and bereft, grieving for a past that no longer fitted into my new world. I was curious to see if others had had similar experiences or if in fact my struggle to settle had been unique. I began by researching relevant literature and journal articles. An analysis of this is provided in Chapter 2. It quickly became apparent that there has been a tremendous amount of research carried out on the topic of culture and culture shock and seemingly less material on reverse culture shock, with the vast majority of articles and books issuing from the USA (Christofi and Thompson, 2007; Dolan, 1994; Gaw, 2000; Hall, 1976; Kohl, 1984; Oberg, 1960). The topics and themes uncovered in the literature closely reflected personal ideas and were the baseline for the interviews; my focus being whether home existed for any one anymore and whether living abroad had impacted on intimate relationships.

In Chapter three the methodology is discussed; of using qualitative research rather than quantitative (McLeod, 2011); using semi-structured interviews (Willig, 2008) with 4 participants selected according to an inclusion criteria (Denscombe, 2003). This produced rich narrative data, which was then analysed using the Constant Comparative Method (Maykut and Morehouse,

1994).The emerging themes in all 4 interviews were identified and gradually narrowed down to 4 propositional statements each including sub-themes. These are substantiated in Chapter 4 with material from participants' transcripts.

Finally there is a discussion of these results, in relation to the literature researched and any thoughts as to further study required are presented in Chapter 5.

1.2 The Aims, Objectives and Rationale of the Study

The aim of this research is to deepen understanding of the impact on the individual of having lived abroad and to explain and clarify the difficulties encountered for individuals on their return to their home country to other counsellors. Bond (2004) suggests an ethical expectation exists that researchers seek opportunities to communicate their findings. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the counselling field by providing valuable insight into reverse culture shock and individual coping mechanisms on re-entry as well as highlight areas of need and where counselling could play a part. Cooper (2008) states that research is a systematic process of inquiry that leads to the development of new knowledge. My aim is to explore the experiences of returning expatriates and to analyse and examine their feelings; to see to what extent their feelings echo those expressed in established literature but also to see what differences, if any, come to the foreground. Knell, 2006 and Pascoe 2000 have studied re-entry in detail from an American perspective. Pascoe (2000) talks about the reality of home as being a far cry from the fairy tale existence their lives used to be.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim was for the literature review to highlight potential gaps in the literature and also to provide the context for my own approach confirming its relevance and appropriateness (O' Leary, 2004).

Hart (2004) notes that a good literature search demonstrates the ability to search, identify and select materials relevant to the topic and which need to be reviewed at a level appropriate to the project. The search strategy used is found in Appendix 1 (page 79).

McLeod (1999) identifies two main areas in which literature can be used from a research perspective. Firstly, it has the capacity to provide a framework from which researchers have a basic construct to work from. Secondly, the basis of previous research serves as a platform from which future research can be generated.

A thematic approach literature search was conducted in the spirit of qualitative research, following the collection of data, in order to limit bias (McLeod, 2003, Silverman, 2005). A smaller preliminary search had been previously explored at the time of selecting the topic. During the course of searching it became clear that the vast majority of articles that were identified have been published in America.

2.2 Overview of Areas Covered

The themes in the literature fall into the following sub-sections:

- Culture; its meaning and effects on the individual; the need to belong.
- Culture shock; disorientation and dislocation, effects on the individual.

- Reverse culture shock, re-entry or repatriation issues, short term and long term.
- The long-term effects of having lived abroad, where is home and who am I.
- Unresolved issues: the impact on relationships moving forward, unresolved grief and loss.

2.3 Culture

It was necessary to review interpretations of culture before beginning to study the literature on culture shock or reverse culture shock. Various anthropologists' and sociologists' definitions of culture were looked at as well as the standard dictionary definitions. Culture is the sum total of the learned behaviour of a group of people, involving traditions; passing these from generation to generation. It is the way a given community expresses core issues, values and assumptions about life; it is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another; culture refers to the total way of life for a particular group, the language used and how feelings and emotion are expressed (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; Kluckhohn, 1963; Kohls, 1984; Wederspahn, 2000).

Collins Dictionary states culture to be the following: the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action or the total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group (Collins, 2011).

Culture is highly significant in the development of individuals, it shapes identity and belonging and provides a framework to make sense of and interpret life. It is caught from as well as absorbed and taught by the surrounding environment (Erikson, 1950; Heibert, 1983; Kohl, 1984). It is a highly complex system which takes many years to absorb and learn. Edward Hall developed the iceberg analogy of culture in 1976, he and others since (Heibert, 1983, Kohls, 1984 (see Figure 1); Weaver, 1987) have maintained that very little of culture is visible above the surface: behaviours, words, customs and traditions are visible but the true meaning and belief, values, attitudes, assumptions and core values are hidden deep down and only become visible when one has truly integrated into the culture by living and operating within it. In today's world, the visible expressions of culture are becoming more uniform throughout the world but the elements in the invisible layer are much slower to change (Van Reken, 2007).

Figure 1. Kohls' representation of culture iceberg (1984)

One becomes part of the group by sharing the deeper dimensions of culture. Being in the know gives a sense of stability, belonging and security needed to function and stops the outsider syndrome (Pollock and Reken, 2001; Hall,

1976; Kohl, 1984). An individual is not born with culture but only with the capacity to learn and use it (Oberg, 1960). Cultural norms are unconsciously taught by parents, community, school and peers. Fail, Thompson, Walker (2004) state that parents are the prime communicators of culture, they use example, praise and correction to instil their values. However the value they instil may be markedly different from the host culture and thus cause conflict, confusion and turmoil.

The reason any behaviour makes sense is simply because it is consistent with what a given person believes in or holds dear, hence many expatriates hold religion close as it remains a constant for them or they come to rely on their inner self for direction (Bowman, 2001; Storti, 2011; Walters and Cuff, 2009).

Expatriates are nomads in the sense that they have no permanent home but they do not belong to a tribe as true nomads do. A nomad's identity in a community is solid even if their existence is defined by movement, this is definitely not the case for a "global nomad" and they can suffer a sense of lack of belonging (McCaig, 1992; Sichel, 2004; Pascoe, 2006). Norma McCaig (1992) founder of Global Nomads International defined a global nomad as anyone who has ever lived abroad before adulthood because of a parent's occupational choice.

2.4 Culture Shock

The term Culture Shock was used by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg in the early 1950s to describe the feelings experienced when travelling to or living in a different country or culture (Oberg, 1960).

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety and disorientation that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. Culture shock tends to follow a pattern: initial ignorance of differences creates a honeymoon period; followed by a period of culture shock during which the need for learning becomes clear; finally observation and imitation result in adjustment (Friedman, Dyke and Murphy, 2009; Oberg, 1960). Oberg suggested the best way to get over culture shock was to integrate with the local people, learning their ways and language. However the greater the involvement with the local culture, the harder it is to leave and repatriate (Oberg, 1960; Storti, 2001).

Children are open and receptive to cross cultural experiences as their sense of identity, relationships with others and worldviews are still relatively immature and underdeveloped (Erikson, 1950/1963; Pollock and Reken, 2001).

A world view may be broadly defined as how a person perceives his or her relationship to the world (nature, institutions, other people, things, etc).

World views are highly correlated with a person's cultural upbringing and life experiences...not only are they composed of our attitudes, values, opinions, and concepts, but they may affect how we think, make decisions, behave and define events (Sue, 1978, p.419).

Culture Shock is not a new phenomenon, in more recent years it has become a more prominent issue and there is more awareness especially in America of the need for support. Milosz (1980) claims total uprootedness is contrary to our nature, and a person, similar to a plant, once removed from the ground tries to send its roots into the ground onto which it lands. Instinctively there is a need to put down roots, to belong, so in order to minimise feelings of

displacement there is an attempt to become part of the community and to be accepted (Lewis and Jungman, 1986).

Culture shock has been defined as an 'uprooting disorder', emphasizing the expatriates' need to dig up deeply embedded roots from their home and then put down roots in the new country. This culture shock represents a complex range of feelings that may occur after a move to a new country. Feelings of confusion and disorientation similar to bereavement may emerge (Cox, 2000; Harris, 2011; Zwingman & Pfister-Ammende, 1973).

2.5 Reverse Culture Shock and its Impact on the Individual

Reverse Culture Shock first received attention in the 1940s on studies of the difficulties of returning armed forces. Since then there has been a fair amount of research on resettlement issues for expatriates, the works and journals found were largely American. Much of the literature found covered common themes of anger, resentment, doubt, pain, fear, shock, depression, sadness and guilt (Dolan, 1994; Gaw, 2000; Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2000).

Research on reverse culture shock focusses on readapting and readjusting to one's own home culture after living in another cultural environment, where the general expectation is to return home to find all, including oneself, unchanged (Gullahorn, 1963; Shilling, 1993; Stelling, 1991). Common feelings of emptiness and loneliness are apparent, as well as a lack of empathy, support or true understanding from others. There are often struggles with self-esteem and identity. Research showed that these issues were heightened if the sojourn abroad was longer than two years (Brislin, 1981; Lewis and Jungman, 1986; Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2000; Storti, 2001).

Fitting in becomes an issue and home is no longer what it was. The sting of re-entry is not so much that things are different but that we are expecting them to be the same and we are no longer the same ourselves (Hoersting and Jenkins, 2010; Useem and Cottrell, 1996).

Schuetz writes:

“To him, life at home is no longer accessible in immediacy. He has stepped, so to speak, into another social dimension isolated from the scheme of reference for life at home” (Schuetz, 1945, p.372).

Repatriation often involves a plummet in: the standard of living; social status; as well as close social interactions and friendships. There is no celebrity status, no standing out in the crowd. This is a struggle and adds to the element of shock (Austin, 1986; Boley, 1986; Naipaul, 1987).

The returnee has an expectation their return will be positive and the shock comes in encountering the exact opposite: there is isolation and loneliness and the likelihood is that when they went abroad they were supported with the culture shock and adjustment. There is no support for returnees. There is a distinct lack of post-assignment programs but plenty of pre-assignment (Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2006; Storti, 2001). There is no understanding as few people have any experience of re-entry.

Reverse culture shock is reinforced by the clash of values people feel on their return; the culture they left behind is deemed more acceptable and comfortable than home, which they now judge and condemn (Knell, 2006). Returnees feel angry, confused and disorientated yet there is an expectation to belong (Pollock and Van Reken, 2001).

Home has been idealised and cannot live up to expectation now. It is often compounded by the fact that important people are not supportive as they have

no comprehension as to why you would not feel happy to be “home”. There is a sense of being a stranger in your own country. There is a pressure to get on with life and this comes from within too (Storti, 2001; Weaver, 1987).

Re-entry is a transition and consists of phases of ending and separation, followed by an unstable period until reintegration begins. The unstable period of re-entry is the shock phase; it is a period involving loss and change, the reaction to loss and change is frequently “shocking” in terms of grief, disorientation and the necessity for adjustment (Bennett, 1977).

The shock is severe; there is a need to redefine identity and belonging, a need to grieve but this is often lacking. There is a fear in returnees that if they adjust back to the homeland they are doing an injustice to their personal and professional growth acquired abroad:

“Each homcomer has tasted the magic fruit of strangeness” (Schuetz, 1945, p.370-1).

Therefore escape or withdrawal are common reactions to reverse culture shock. The risk of not being valued is high for the returnee yet the need to belong is a huge driver too. Living overseas gives a unique outlook on the world but often people at home do not share that perspective (Knell, 2006; Pusch, 1988; Sand-Hart, 2010; Storti, 2001).

There are a number of variables affecting the degree of reverse culture shock, these include: whether the return was voluntary; expected; previous experience; length of overseas stay; degree of interaction with overseas culture (the more interaction the harder it is to readjust); the supportiveness of the re-entry environment; whether a career was given up to move abroad, time spent overseas is not seen as a positive step in career terms and skills

acquired managing abroad are not valued back in the home country (Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2000; Storti, 2001).

“People don’t actually get over experiences, especially profound ones; instead they incorporate them into their character and personality and respond to all subsequent experience from the perspective of their new self” (Storti, 2001, p.65).

The term re-entry makes the assumption that the return is familiar yet this is often not the case and the shock of re-entry can cause dysfunction (Dolan, 1994; McCaig, 1992; Pollock and Reken, 2001). Moorings have been lost and simultaneously close friendships and support systems. There is a struggle to find a new sense of belonging. Pollock and Reken (2001), use a model to explain:

Table 1. Pollock and Van Reken (2001), Relational Patterns to Surrounding Culture.

Foreigner	looks different and thinks different
Adopted	looks different, thinks alike
Hidden Immigrant	looks alike, thinks different
Mirror	looks alike, thinks alike

People at home expect returnees to fit in the mirror box but in fact they remain as hidden immigrants for many years, possibly forever. Hence:

“There is no such thing as going home; there is only an illusion – a mirage in the desert (Pascoe, 2000, p.184).

Returnees struggle with their ignorance of everyday living; television programmes, music, slang, latest phrases. As true immigrants they would not be criticised. Fitting back in comes at a huge price: loss of self; denial of a previous existence and consequently suppression of sadness and anger. There is a feeling of insecurity and inferiority in the home culture and the rate of suicide increases after the first year at home (Pollock and Reken, 2001; Schubert, 1984; Smith, 1996).

Re-entry research seems to have been limited to quantitative studies that, although identifying the culture shock phenomenon, do not provide in-depth descriptions of the experience (Rogers & Ward, 1993; Rohrllich & Martin, 1991; Tamura & Furnham, 1993). The purpose of this study was to conduct a phenomenological study to provide an in-depth description of participants' experiences of returning home; inevitably this was inextricably linked not just to the individual but the whole family.

2.6 Third Culture Kids, their Concept of Roots, Home and Identity.

It was impossible to do a study into returnees without looking at the impact on living abroad for children as it is often the case that the returnee is a third culture kid or indeed adult third culture kid and if not they are raising third culture kids.

Ruth Hill Useem first studied children who lived abroad and termed them third culture kids in 1950s; this term was then refined and modified by Pollock and Reken (2001) to become:

A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCKs life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background (Pollock and Reken, 2001, p.19).

The above statement fits with Useem's view that the third culture kid is a product of the home culture, that of the parents, this is the first culture; the second culture being the host culture where the family lived and the shared lifestyle of the expat community becomes the third culture. Children growing up in this culture are third culture kids (Useem, 1973).

These children are not a new phenomenon but until recently have been largely invisible, to the extent that in the UK no term for such children has been found. Pre 1946 only missionaries or diplomats travelled abroad and their children were educated at boarding schools in their home country. Their significance has increased as growing up in a multi-cultural society has become the norm universally and the third culture kids of the 20th century are the prototype citizens of the 21st century; living alongside and cooperating with varying cultures is second nature to them (Smith, 1991; Useem and Downie, 1976 Ward, 1989).

Useem updated her definition to embrace the volume now living abroad to be simply: children who accompany their parents into another society (Useem, 1993).

This seems over simplified compared to Pollock and Reken's definition which gives more clarity and indicates some of the issues which may arise.

There are many benefits in the TCK way of life but there are challenges too and the literature focusses on each of these. Expatriates form very close

friendships whilst abroad but they equally experience an undue amount of pain and loss when those friendships end, which they invariably do in such a mobile society (Sand-Hart 2010).

The greatest challenges that TCKs face are in forming their sense of identity and sense of belonging (Bennett, 1993; Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001; Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999).

TCKs move between cultures before they have had the opportunity to complete the task of personal or cultural identity development (Huff, 2001; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). TCKs form a sense of personal and cultural identity the same way everyone else does – by “catching it” from the environment and cues around them (McCaig, 1994; Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). However, TCKs “catch” many different cues, cultural rules, behaviour, and values from the various cultures they have experienced. Finding a sense of identity becomes difficult and confusing (Howe, 2011; Sussman 2000; Walters and Auton Cuff 2009).

There is a struggle to define home, it tends to be about people and not places. Roots are shallow, not too deeply attached and this can have a major influence on the ability to trust and form meaningful relationships. There is a fear of intimacy due to the fear of loss and separation; confidence and independence can hide grief and despair and detachment (Bowlby, 1973; Eidse and Sichel, 2004; Harwood, Miller and Irizarry 1995; Macgregor Wise, 2000; Pascoe 2006; Pollock and Reken, 2001; Sand-Hart 2010; Storti, 2001).

As there is no cultural identity for TCKs to attach to they need to turn inwards to find themselves and define who they are in the world. Each relocation adds a new cultural influence. Lives may be enriched by the exposure to so many

cultures but it is tied to losses as there are no roots in the home culture and little personal sense of identity (Eidse and Sichel, 2004; Sand-Hart, 2010).

Personal needs often go unfulfilled so as to have a sense of belonging. All children need a sense of belonging, a secure sense of self and a stable identity (Bowlby, 1988).

When TCKs do return “home” there is often a struggle to settle and be accepted, like their parents, they are missing timelines and pieces of knowledge which can set them apart and humiliate them. They are seen as stupid or ignorant as there is little or no understanding; they do not dress or talk as others do, they speak several languages but this is not valued; they often have high academic standards, but this can be seen as arrogant and showing-off so they stop talking about their former life. This experience can be isolating and alienating (Storti 2001; Sand-Hart, 2010).

2.7 Long term impact of having lived abroad- relationships, grief and loss

There is little recognition of feelings of sadness, grief and loss for the returnee. The period of time away has brought about profound changes in the individual and on returning there can be a severe knock to self-esteem and self-confidence as there is little or no recognition of the life that was left behind.

“We believe we are going home, but home has turned out to be just a reflection of memory and nostalgia” (Pascoe, 2000, p.184).

The time to deal with the ending of a post abroad is lacking because of the immediate impact of a new beginning, there is no time, space or companion to

acknowledge emotions and deal with them, so it is often hard to grieve (Christofi and Thompson, 2007; Knell, 2006, Pascoe 2000).

Although change, stress and transition are a normal part of life during re-entry, stress levels can go extremely high: dealing with feelings of loss, grief, depression and loneliness, coping with these feelings alone rather than seeking help as there is no one who truly understands the predicament (Knell 2006; Pascoe, 2006; Storti, 2001). From a phenomenological perspective: *"We do not see things as they are: we see things as we are"* (Knell, 2006, p.18).

Returnees struggle to find a place to express their overriding emotion of grief and yet leaving a place and people with whom your life has become inextricably linked is bereavement (Harris, 2011). Any loss is a form of bereavement but the experience of re-entry is an acute example as there are so many losses. Often returnees deny they are grieving and suppress their sadness. They can withdraw or escape with alcohol, anti-depressants and sometimes suicidal thoughts (Knell, 2006; Storti, 2001).

The loss is not just about all the people left behind but also loss of status and identity, suddenly you are a nobody back at home (Knell, 2006).

If this loss is continually suppressed it can lead to anger and bitterness and this can lead to broken and unhealthy relationships and an inability to commit (Knell, 2006; Pollock and Reken, 2001).

Expatriates have gone through major transitions far more often than people brought up in one place; separation can become a long-term issue. In hidden losses such as these the main issue is that because there is no death there is no recognised way to mourn yet each hidden loss relates to major human

needs of belonging and being understood and valued (Davis et al, 2010; Harris, 2011; Ledman, 2001). They can develop a shell around them no-one can penetrate and hence the issue with long-term commitment and relationships (Hervey, 2009; Sand-Hart, 2010; Schaetti, B.F. & Ramsey S.J. 1999). It would be interesting to see if the areas highlighted by the literature review were reflected in the participants' interviews.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

In determining my research question I was clear that my aim for this study was to examine the lived experience of counsellors who have spent at least two years abroad and to examine their perception of culture shock and reverse culture shock. I was particularly interested in their involvement with the local culture and their perception of the impact of their experience on their consequent ability to form and maintain intimate relationships.

Before deciding which method to pursue, two approaches were examined, quantitative or qualitative research. Silverman (2005) intimates that when deciding which method to use it should be the best fit for the study. Qualitative studies often use small numbers of participants and focus on each individual experience as opposed to larger numbers and generalised findings in quantitative studies. Qualitative research is based on a phenomenological position, while quantitative research is based on a positivist position (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The positivist view is that there is an objective truth which can be proven and theories or hypotheses upheld. This view would not fit with this study as the aim is not to prove or test a hypothesis.

Qualitative research aims to connect with an individual's phenomenological world and this is appropriate for the aims of this study as it focuses on the individual's personal experiences. The purpose is to reach a deeper

awareness of human experience not to validate a finding or theory, to gain a deep understanding of each participant's experience.

“Qualitative study is built upon a deep concern with understanding human experience” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.2).

The goal of qualitative research is to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of the research topic (Maykut and Morehouse 1994). *“Qualitative research addresses issues by grasping the subjective meaning of issues from the perspective of the participants”* (Flick 2011, p.12).

The fundamental aim was to discover what things really mean to participants but also to be equally aware that one's own stance and interpretation cannot be completely removed from the research process. The intention was to try to explore the phenomenon from as neutral a perspective as possible, using the process of “epoche” or “bracketing” to set aside own views and/or prejudices (McLeod, 2011). There has been as much transparency as possible about this and a setting aside of personal views so as not to cloud the analysis of participants' comments (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Personal experiences and feelings have been declared from the start so that they can be laid aside for the purpose of the study as: *“Good qualitative analysis looks at the text from all possible angles”* (McLeod 2011, p.80). All qualitative methodologies recognise that the researcher is implicated in the research process: *“However are you the author or witness in the research process?”* (Willig, 2008, p.13).

Access to phenomenological data was best served by using semi-structured interviews, as there was a desire to understand personal perception, leading

to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon rather than for generalisation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Data were analysed using the constant comparative method.

3.2 Research Sample

Qualitative research uses small samples as the data collected is involved and meaningful. In an interview the interviewee is able to talk at length rather than respond to a set of pre-planned questions and so there is a good chance the material obtained will be reflective of the true experience of the interviewee; it gives autonomy to the interviewee; the conversation follows their agenda (Brett Davies 2007). The aim was to interview 4-6 participants to get fair representation. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two main approaches. Probability sampling is based on statistical theory and is generally used with large numbers and a sample representative of the population. Probability samples can be randomly selected without the bias or influence of the researcher (Denscombe, 2010). Non probability sampling was chosen as the goal was to:

“Acquire deep understanding of some phenomenon experienced by a carefully selected group of people” (Mintz 2010, p.9).

Purposive sampling was selected, interviewing participants who have been chosen because they best represent the phenomenon to be investigated and have the necessary experience to engage in the enquiry (Smith et al 2009). An advert was produced to attract participants (Appendix 2, p.81) and circulated at local Universities which offer counselling courses: Chester and

Glyndwr. The advert was sent to other counsellors working for the NHS from my placement. There were five positive responses from this in a short space of time. The following criteria and rationale was used for selecting participants. (See Table 2).

Table 2. Inclusion criteria and rationale for selecting participants

<u>Inclusion Criteria</u>	<u>Rationale</u>
Counsellors in training or trained who have lived abroad for at least 2 years	It takes a considerable amount of time to adapt and settle in any new environment and to adopt and accept new cultural surroundings. For reverse culture shock to take place, culture shock has to have occurred and been overcome in the first place, it could take a minimum of 2 years for this process to happen(Knell, 2006;Pascoe,2006).
Participants who were not main wage earners supported by a major company	The main employee is supported and not as disorientated by the move. The company is usually at pains to keep the employee happy.
Counsellors who have access to	In order to adhere to ethical practice

personal therapy	and self-care, participants needed to have access to personal counselling to provide the necessary support to explore any issues which arise for them out of the interviews.
<u>Exclusion Criteria</u>	<u>Rationale</u>
Counsellors who are still living abroad	The intention was to examine the effects of reverse culture shock and difficulties of repatriation

3.3 Pilot Interview

Pilot interviews offer an ideal opportunity for the researcher to make any necessary amendments to instructions, interview questions, format or technical equipment (McLeod, 2003; Rumsey & Marks, 2004). The researcher is able to become more confident in the interview process and collecting data. The process also helps to validate and refine the interview questions (Dallos and Vetere 2005). By conducting a pilot interview there was an opportunity to ascertain the length of time each interview would take as well as determine the appropriateness of the questions. The participant was also able to provide feedback about the whole interview process. Davies(2007) states the purpose of piloting is to do with the overall period of data collection rather than focus on individual detail, so it helps to ensure the research produces good outcomes.

3.4 Data Collection

The most popular method of collecting qualitative data is by face to face interviews, whether those are structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The use of unstructured interviews requires a skilful researcher who can follow and track the participant; there is no script for the researcher. The data may be varied and rich but it may be difficult to collate the information (Davies, 2007). On the other hand, a structured interview provides limitations in spontaneity of the responses (Sanders and Liptrot, 1993) as it follows an ordered series of questions. Interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate as the intention was to investigate feelings, opinions, emotions and experiences in depth:

“Using a careful and considerate approach, participants can be encouraged to discuss personal and sensitive issues in an open and honest manner” (Denscombe 2010, p.174).

Semi-structured interviews were used as this method allowed the process to be open-ended and yet also cover topics of main interest whilst allowing the participant the flexibility to take that wherever they wished. It was not felt that a questionnaire would have given the depth of information sought and there was concern that a structured interview may have led participants into the researcher's phenomenological experience as opposed to theirs. An interview guide (Appendix 6, p.90) was used to provide a framework, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point out that using this approach requires less skill than

an unstructured interview but still uncovers the depth of the participants' feelings with open-ended questions.

On receiving an interest from the advert each person was emailed an information sheet (Appendix 3, p.82) detailing the researcher and the purpose of the study; the confidential and anonymous nature of the study and the benefits and risks in participating so that participants clearly opted in to the interview as opposed to being sought out and an inclusion criteria (Appendix 4, p.85) which they were asked to fill in and return. It was hoped this would help to establish trust and a rapport. Data collection and the aims of the study need to be overt (Maykut and Morehouse 1994). Also BACPs Ethical Guidelines for Researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (2004) gives guidelines on good practice stating the need for openness and integrity: confidentiality; accuracy and disclosure of limitations.

Participants were contacted by email initially and then by telephone to set up interview time, place and date. Two came to Chester University and two chose their place of work, confidentiality and privacy were maintained through use of a private, secluded room.

Before beginning the interview both consent forms (Appendix 5a and 5b, p. 86, 88) were signed in line with the Ethical requirements of the University of Chester, and assurance was sought that the participant was still happy to proceed. An interview guide had been prepared, Barker, Pistrang and Elliott (1995) claim interview guides allow the researcher to prompt, probe or clarify when necessary. The questions for participants were sent the day prior to the interview (Appendix 7, p. 92).

The interviews were approximately one hour long to allow for a variety of questions and some time for a relationship to develop between researcher and participant, there was an awareness of the dangers of veering off the interview schedule into counsellor mode as practitioners need to be very mindful of the boundaries between counselling and research (Dallos and Vetere 2005).

Yet Maykut and Morehouse (1994) observe that having a deep and genuine interest about understanding another's experience results in skilful qualitative interviews. The aim was to be in their frame of reference as far as is possible and afterwards to:

“Create a comprehensive record of participants' words and actions, making sure as little as possible is lost in translation” (Willig, 2008, p.15).

The interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed to become the data. The data was personally transcribed as it was felt this would help with immersion in the material (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) Participants were provided with a copy of the transcription and invited to amend or delete any part of it before giving final approval for the data to be used for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

In order to maintain a sense of authenticity, validity and transparency it was vital to have a systematic and structured method of data analysis. A way of interpreting qualitative data is by thematic analysis according to Sanders and Wilkins (2010).

Having looked at the data analysis methods available it was felt the best fit for this research was the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This method is described as inductive as there are no prior hypotheses; themes emerge from the data itself unlike the deductive approach of quantitative research. It is a product of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, described as a means for deriving theory, but the purpose here is simply a means for processing data. It is compatible with phenomenological research methodology (Maykut and Morehouse 1994).

Before even engaging in analysis a number of authors comment on a process called "epoche" which:

"Is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation" (Katz 1987, p.36-37).

This helps the researcher to recognise their own feelings and prejudices and as far as possible ignore them for the purpose of the study. I do have strong feelings on the topic and must be clear as to what these are and not allow them to infiltrate analysis of participants' interviews. An in depth understanding of their frame of reference was required, to indwell (Maykut

and Morehouse 1994). Personal perceptions and understanding were bracketed off and recorded in a journal log kept throughout the research.

Constant Comparative method was also chosen as:

“This method provides the beginning researcher with a clear path for engaging in analysis of substantial amounts of data in a way which is challenging and illuminating” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.127).

And:

“The process of qualitative data is one of culling for meaning from the words and actions of the participants in the study, framed by the researcher’s focus of inquiry” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.128).

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.135) describe a systematic process of four stages to follow in the constant comparative method of data analysis.

Figure 2. Constant comparative method of data analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.135)

Immersion into the data began at the interview stage beginning with making a mental note of similar themes and then recording these in a journal (Appendix 8, p. 93). Transcribing gave more opportunity to immerse oneself in the verbal and non-verbal data. This allowed some space to think about the emotional as

well as physical elements of the interview prior to analysis (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Each interview was printed onto different coloured paper so that each participant was instantly identifiable (Appendix 9, p. 94). Data was prepared using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method of inductive category coding. Four sheets of flipchart paper were laid out together and then each section of meaning was cut up from the first interview and attached to a heading (unit of meaning) on an index card. The participant was identifiable by the colour of the paper and a note of the page number was made on each card so it was easy to refer back to what was said and when. Index cards and units of meaning were added until all the data of the first transcript had been unitised (Appendix 10, p. 95, ALM). I then proceeded to work in the same way with the second interview (Appendix 10, p.95, BTF) adding new units of meaning as they occurred and if a unit of meaning was the same as the first one; it was added to that index card heading. This process was continued until all the data was used. The same procedure was carried out with the transcripts of participants' three (Appendix 10, p. 95, CKF) and four (Appendix 10, p.95, DJF) until all the data was used and unitised (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The result was 72 index cards with sections of units of meaning written on index cards above (Appendix 11, p. 96).

At this point it was possible to see themes and topics which overlapped and reoccurred and these were noted on a discovery sheet (Appendix 12, p. 97) which was then used as the provisional basis for the inductive category coding. It was possible to move the index cards around and group them further together easily as they were tacked onto flipchart paper. One main

idea was taken and grouped together with others which contained similar units of meaning (Appendix 13, p. 98). This process is called the “look/feel alike” criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and produced 35 categories. Categories evolved rapidly in the initial analysis. Any cards which seemed to be outside the content of the study were placed in a separate area labelled miscellaneous (Appendix 14, p.99). These cards were reviewed again for possible inclusion before the analysis was completed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

A rule of inclusion was written for each category by re reading the data and adding or taking away as appropriate (Appendix 13, p.98). After narrowing the categories down in this way it was possible to see if there was any further overlap and so I was able to cluster some together thus narrowing the categories more. For each category I wrote another rule for inclusion (Appendix 19, p.104) conveying an idea within the data. This became a propositional statement (Appendix 20, p.107) as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and helped to identify clear areas for my research as:

“Rules for inclusion, stated as propositions, begin to reveal what you are learning about the phenomenon you are studying and are a critical step in arriving at your research outcomes” (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p.139).

Once a rule for inclusion for a category had been written, all cards in that group were placed under the category heading (Appendix 14, p.99) and there were no more than 8 cards in each category. The header and cards were labelled with a code which categorised them all together and transferred the data from the wall to individual plastic wallets, this gave the flexibility to

rearrange the cards relatively easily and meant there was no room for error as each card had its own code. Gradually 4 major themes began to emerge with several sub themes. These became the outcome propositions (Appendices 15, 16, 17, 18, pages 100-3).

3.6 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

“Validity can be defined as the extent to which our research describes, measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain” (Willig 2008, p.15).

Validity in qualitative research can also be referred to as ‘trustworthiness’ concerning feelings surrounding the researcher’s interpretation and the study’s findings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). It is harder to validate qualitative research compared with quantitative research which has higher sample numbers and more statistical back up to prove the point. Also the researcher is in the study however removed they try to remain and keeping a journal has helped maintain awareness of personal views and preconceptions surrounding the topic, therefore the reflexivity of the researcher is apparent (McLeod 2003). Etherington (2004) describes reflexivity as an ability to notice our responses to the world around us and so consequently to be more aware. There has been clarity about personal involvement in this research and subject area. However as Willig (2008) points out qualitative data techniques aim to ensure that participants are free to challenge and correct assumptions by member checks. All participants were sent the transcript before any data analysis began and were able to make any adjustments or amendments they felt necessary and were therefore also able to validate their own statements.

In addition, by using the constant comparative method a robust data interpretive tool (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) there is a very clear audit trail (Lincoln and Guba 1985) in the form of discovery sheets (Appendix 12, p.97), and information about how propositions were formed (Appendix 20, p.107). The findings are linked to the literature review, McLeod (2001) proposes that a literature review should be included as part of the criteria for validity in qualitative research.

A supervisor has been able to guide the direction of my research, make suggestions and helped to focus the research.

3.7 Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Chester Ethics Committee and a research supervisor was assigned. Research was conducted in line with the BACP Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines for researching Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP 2009). The guidelines include: competence and conduct, informed consent, confidentiality and rights to withdraw. Signed informed consent is an essential ethical research procedure (Denscombe, 2010; Silverman, 2005). The above validate the study and also ensure the safety of participants.

This was ensured in the following ways:

- Each had received an information sheet outlining the aims, hopes and expectations of the research study in as far as this could be anticipated.

- There was written informed consent before any data collection took place. Bond (2004) clarifies that participants should give full informed consent before commencing any research.
- Participants were able to develop a trusting relationship with the researcher to allow them to open up about meaningful aspects but also declare anything they felt uncomfortable about.
- There was the right to withdraw at any point up until publication with no consequences to the participant.
- There was some time set aside for debriefing at the end of the interview to check out how the participant was feeling.
- Confidentiality was maintained regarding any names shared as all names were changed and any identifying features removed and this was made clear to each participant.
- The recordings were kept on a memory stick and kept in a secure filing cabinet.
- The participant had support in case any issues arose as a result of the interviews.
- All participants had an opportunity to see and check the transcript of their interview and remove or edit any sections they wished.

3.8 Limitations

There are limitations to the research in that this is a small sample group and may well not be indicative of the majority of people's experience. Every person's phenomenological experience is different and this research relies on

the participant's ability to report on their experience and the presumption that the researcher can comment on the process (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

The researcher is inexperienced and as such reliant on having the skills to ask questions which are pertinent and deep enough to address underlying issues and this may have an impact on the findings.

There were constraints on time and pressure to get interviews done as well as being reliant on having sufficient participants. Also having only one person to interpret the data and decide on the categories and propositions is limiting to the final analysis (McLeod, 2011).

There is also limitation in the fact that qualitative research is executed through the medium of language therefore it is virtually impossible to analyse the true feelings of the participant regarding an event or issue (Willig, 2008).

Chapter 4

Outcomes

This chapter discussed the outcome of interviews with four participants. Each one was assigned a code to maintain their anonymity and their profiles, taken from the inclusion sheet, are shown.

Participant	ALM	BTF	CKF	DJF
Age group (years)	25-35	51-65	36-50	51-65
Children	yes	yes	yes	yes
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female
Place of residence abroad	Asia/Africa	Europe	Asia	Middle East/USA
Time abroad as an adult (years)	2-5	5+	5+	5+
Lived abroad as a child	yes	no	yes	yes
Reason for return to UK	work	children's education	children's education	End of husband's job
Return to UK (years ago)	9	5	5	10
Extensive local community involvement abroad	yes	yes	no	yes
Employed whilst abroad	yes	no	no	yes
Access to personal counselling	yes	yes	yes	yes

Table 3 Profile of Participants

After analysing the data from each transcript using Glaser and Strauss (1967) constant comparative method four main propositional statements emerged each with a number of sub statements.

Four Propositional Statements

Proposition 1: Living Abroad has an Impact on Identity.

- 1.1 Participants develop a strong inner locus of evaluation.
- 1.2 Religion can play a part in identity and have a positive input.
- 1.3 Participants are “hidden immigrants” in their home country.
- 1.4 On return it is hard to maintain a sense of feeling valued.

Proposition 2: Participants experienced the Impact of Attachment and Detachment.

- 2.1 Participants are not well rooted.
- 2.2 Home tends to relate to people not places, home is not a constant.
- 2.3 There is a huge impact on friendships and relationships for returnees.
- 2.4 Participants returned to home areas where their family lived for a base and support.

Proposition 3: Participants struggle to resettle in their Home Country for a Number of Reasons:

- 3.1 Participants returned home to meet the needs of their children above their own needs.
- 3.2 Cultural values of the home country no longer fit their “world view”.
- 3.3 The loss and pain of what has been left behind are unrecognised and they are filled with unresolved grief.
- 3.4 There is a feeling of isolation and alienation but a need to belong, to fit.

Proposition 4: There is a Period of Transition, Change and Shock which can take Years of Readjustment.

4.1 Each participant had to conquer culture shock.

4.2 Each participant had to come to terms with reverse culture shock.

4.3 Return involved a drop in standard of living and often resulted in financial issues.

In order to provide a clear audit trail all examples of data from my transcriptions are referred to in a coded format.

1. Living Abroad has an Impact on Identity:

1.1 Participants develop a strong Inner Locus of Evaluation.

Participants expressed a strong inner sense of self. The external environment is changeable and values are not constant therefore they learn to trust themselves, their inner voice.

That links the five precepts of not misusing your senses and with alcohol and with other things, just to know yourself really.

(ALM-15)

Here there always seems to be this is how you're meant to do things and it's got to be like this, so I think it is hard and I need to remember, I can be who I am...I have my identity, and my identity's always been quite strong for me.... I've held on to me.

(BTF-16)

I think coming back and starting afresh I came out much more able to separate my stuff from other people's so there was a part of me that felt confident from that, I knew myself.

(CKF-9)

There is no right or wrong answer just safety I suppose in the knowledge that what you did at the time, you feel deep inside was right.

(DJF-6)

1.2 Religion can play a part in identity and have a positive input.

Faith provides a constant in a changeable world. It seems it is not the religion itself which is important but the belief. Participant ALM talks about the comfort and support of Buddhism

It's the right thing you know, it's where I go to relax...it settles your mind and reassures you....it's good, the Buddhism side of things and the respect for all life.

(ALM-6)

Participant DJF talks about the support from the church

That community really helped....just stepping back into the church was probably actually in many ways, what got me through a lot..... because I was going through such a terrible stage.

(DJF: 7)

Observing another religion from the outside can be supportive according to Participant CKF.

We were respectful and interested, I was very interested in sort of teachings and some aspects of it were really attractive you know they're very family orientated

(CKF: 3)

1.3 Participants are “hidden immigrants” in their home country; they look alike but think differently (Pollock and Reken, 2001).

When participants returned from a sojourn abroad there was an expectation for them to slot back in where they left off. There is no allowance by others for feeling differently unlike the attitude towards real immigrants where allowances for not knowing current ways and words are made.

The participants struggled with reintegrating into the community:

I suffered from trying to reintegrate... reintegration back into your own culture when you feel like a foreigner but you don't look like one...

(ALM-8)

I don't really belong and I think that's the problem, when I do belong I can feel more embedded, I can feel more comfortable and really me, that might take time, because there are too many things that I just don't agree with.

(BTF-20)

A real feeling of I've been to Pluto and back and now I don't quite know how to be around people here

(CKF-9)

Perhaps what I felt was not a language barrier, but a lack of understanding you know, it was simple things like going to the restroom, having a cookie or a nap.

(DJF-10)

1.4 On return it is hard to maintain a sense of feeling valued.

Participants commented that there is no recognition of the skills they acquired abroad, the ability to speak several languages is redundant and interaction with other cultures is unimportant.

I felt really good when I was speaking Thai, people are really complimentary whereas when you come to this country and you speak English, if you get one thing wrong people pick up on it and they're not very nice....I struggle so I want to go back to Thailand, it does feel like a good home really to be myself; to have my effort valued

(ALM-10)

I would have been able to get work there, whereas here I came back and I spent a year and a half trying, I didn't even get an interview. And we're talking hair salon, cleaning the floor...

(BTF-14)

Just being really valued for being different whereas in this country we've got to draw the line, stiff upper lip, be normal, don't be different

(CKF-14)

Not being valued for the effort you put in, the British for you

(DJF16)

2. Participants experienced the Impact of Attachment and Detachment.

2.1 Participants are not well rooted.

Living abroad has often been normalised and there is no fear in living there but there is a struggle to belong to any one place. There is a struggle to attach to any one place. Places change and participants learnt either not to root too deeply or feel the pain of removal if they did.

I mean I've lived in other countries before and that normalised living abroad and having different experiences and uprooting and then plonking down somewhere else didn't bother me.... You know it always feels as if you're kind of floating a bit because you never feel settled...

(ALM-9)

I had the best of intentions, I wanted roots in a village and it wasn't going to work like that, we could not settle.

(BTF-6)

There's definitely caught between two worlds and my husband is still overseas so my roots here are shallow, they could probably be disentangled without too much agony I'm very conflicted

(CKF-9)

For some disentangling roots is a very painful process

I think there is this perception that because you've got a home, that's your roots. That's just a building, I was rooted elsewhere and ripping them out was horrendous. So hard, it made me ill and I just wasn't aware I was so ill.

(DJF-14)

2.2 Home tends to relate to people and not places, as home is not a constant.

Home is an illusion, it is no longer the place left behind, home is a temporary fixture, people are important. There is a reluctance to call any one place home in case that is taken away again.

I came back to the old family home but it didn't feel that way... so it's a bit weird, the idea of home is a bit fragmented. I don't know where home is, I've got a house, an abode....

(ALM-8)

Feeling really at home I think will take time, I need to take time, and I've always needed to take time...

(BTF-14)

I am caught between two worlds and I wonder whether if you go to a different culture, if you ever really come back... I think it is the people rather than the place. I do feel a little unsettled, being in this house which I have never loved.

(CKF-11)

Returning to a home already familiar does not seem to help with re-entry struggles:

I didn't want to be here at all, even though I had a beautiful home, you know, the home was empty, it was our family home for 26 years, and I didn't want to be there. I had this house to come back to but it isn't my home, it isn't what I thought it was, there is no such thing as going home.

(DJF-13)

2.3 There is a huge impact on friendships and relationships for returnees.

Participants expressed difficulties in managing relationships and friendships in the light of their experiences abroad. Whilst abroad the depth of friendships is vitally important as close family members are absent, this often serves to magnify the difficulties of resettling at home as the grief and loss felt are not understood by friends or family.

You're just going to lose out you know, you lose these relationships or you feel guilty.

(ALM-11)

And I really miss, I do miss the close contact, you know, real friends....I kind of withdrew a bit because I can't be doing with making loads of new friends anymore

(BTF-13)

There is no question that we've learnt a lot through painful processes of starting afresh, having to lose and make new friends and adapt....I've got lots of skills in making friends and I have learnt how to keep myself safe, not to feel that pain... it comes across as being aloof and a loner

(CKF-9-10)

Participant DJF reflects on the pain of leaving friends abroad:

They were very special people, so I felt I grew as a person over there, you know to really get to know somebody with love, I loved them so much, it's really hard, very strange....it was awful. How can I feel like this when I have only known them for 3 years, no one could possibly understand how I felt

(DJF-14)

The impact on intimate relationships also seems to take its toll by living abroad:

I need her to be settled and then I'll feel settled and less responsible for her happiness, less burden on me.

(ALM-16)

Wife (not British) returned with ALM from abroad.

I just thought, no, this isn't right, something's not right here....Our values were so different and I made a mistake. I took a risk and it was the wrong person

(BTF-15)

Husband travelled to and from abroad whilst BTF stayed back in UK with children.

I think if my relationship with my husband was at risk...I don't know it is so difficult, it's extremely traumatic....would I uproot everybody again for him?

(CKF-13)

Husband still living abroad for job, CKF in UK.

I was not happy and slowly but surely you drift....it's very sad, it's very hard....things evolve over time that you can't always put a stop to. I said this isn't working, you will never return to the UK and I will never want to go out and live there...it was just very sad, it was tough, horrible.

(DJF-5)

Husband could not settle back in UK and moved abroad again; DJF and children remained in UK.

This also impacted on future relationships:

I was more protected in forming another relationship. Thinking right it needs to be my way now. I need to be in control of my own life

(DJF-12)

2.4 Participants returned to home areas where their family lived for a base and support.

Participants came back to areas which were familiar and therefore comforting to them, either they grew up there or they had family around them, the focus again being people rather than the actual place.

Dad was really helpful so we went back to the family home to live with my dad, he was really good.

(ALM-7)

My support was my family, my mum and dad who were lovely

(CKF-11)

For two participants although family helped they could not understand the stress and difficulties being faced.

I've got family who live not far away, they were around but not always in a very supportive way, they struggled to understand where I was and how I felt.

(BTF-8)

My mum helped with the children, she really didn't have an understanding of what I was going through; she's of the era where you just put up and shut up.

(DJF-4)

3. Participants struggle to resettle in their home country for a number of reasons:

3.1 Participants returned home to meet the needs of their children above their own needs.

The participants felt a need and responsibility to their children; this forced their return to the home country. Each participant felt they could better meet the educational needs of their children by returning to the UK and unquestionably gave up their own futures for the sake of their children.

When we came back here a lot of it was because my kids were having a problem. I needed to go back, not because I particularly like England but because they needed something

(ALM-1)

I didn't feel it was what I wanted, I knew I didn't really have a choice, I thought it was better for the children to have the opportunities , I just

felt it was right for them. Life changed and that's the important thing my life entirely changed.

(BTF-5)

The first two were a school year apart, it would have been pretty rough to have pulled one right through a GCSE course, we decided we had to prioritise them

(CKF-5)

He gets offered this great job and off he goes to Hong Kong and I said no I'm not coming because by this time the girls were older and settled into school and I thought I can't do this now, education is so important.

(DJF-5)

When asked if she would take the opportunity to live abroad again

I would now because the children are grown up. If they were living at home and still in education, I would not, no, because of the traumas: education and then coming back, having to do it all over again.

(DJF-16)

3.2 Cultural values of the home country no longer fit their “world view”.

Where participants experienced real exposure and integration to the host culture, they often found it difficult to accept the cultural views of the home country. Their sense of values had changed and no longer matched the views at home.

If you go outside the box and you live abroad then you can see what's actually inside the box and you can see how British culture is, you can see the corruption but no one wants to see that.

(ALM-5)

It's wonderful to learn and understand other ways of being, other ways of thinking and I always embrace that, I am not sure it is always embraced here though

(BTF-16)

Your face has to fit and you have to play the grey person in this environment

(CKF-3)

In America it was absolutely great and so easy... and people were so welcoming...I couldn't have asked for more....but back here, you can go off running and splat onto the floor and nobody will stop. How sad is that? Awful.

(DJF-12)

3.3 The loss and pain of what has been left behind are unrecognised and results in unresolved grief.

Participants all expressed loss at what they had experienced abroad but also carried guilt for having lived a better lifestyle and therefore tended to keep their sadness hidden.

Settling back in this country when I was about 8 was really tricky and I hated it and struggled a lot, I had no one to talk to, no one who understood me.

(ALM-2)

It felt very difficult at that time... a heavy time ...It's taken years to feel at home and I don't know if that will ever be. And I really miss the life and people...I couldn't just go from place to place, that hurts too much, so I am here now and maybe this is home.

(BTF-16)

Talking to you has made me realise how tough it has been and how moving is not a simple geographic act, it's painful; there has been a huge impact on all of us.

(CKF-14)

It was very difficult coming back....the structure had gone and it was a panic and I just thought I don't want to be here. And I was so terribly sad and it takes its toll...I could not cope with the re-entry process again, it is heart-wrenching, and the girls, it would not have been fair....I don't want them to see me in a mess again.

(DJF-16)

It's a fantastic experience but it has an awful lot of impact on your life and you don't always think of that....so would I recommend it? I don't know.

(DJF-17)

3.4 There is a feeling of isolation and alienation and a need to belong, fit in.

Participants struggled to fit back in on their return home; they tended to give an external view of coping but actually became quite withdrawn and depressed. Yet there is a need to belong and be part of the community.

I've really had to struggle, financially and emotionally really it's quite tricky and just me being in that role of being the husband and just providing for my wife and kind of putting myself at neglect lots of times really.

(ALM-16)

I'd been cut off from the people I loved. I was very cut off from my life before, and my world had been turned upside down. I have to make a life here, I like to belong...I like to be involved, I'm not very good in isolation

(BTF-11)

I didn't want to share my feelings, so I kept quiet, I even kept it from my parents, it was silent pain and I didn't really pick up that well with friends from old. I worried we would not fit in...that caused a delay in feeling okay and settled. It felt like a scary, lonely place...

(CKF-7)

I was reluctant to make new friends because I felt I just want the ones that I've lost, the ones close to me. It stopped me going out; I kept my

door closed. It was a struggle and an adjustment which you just don't know how to deal with, because you're confused by your own feelings. Made me feel very guilty and I have a lot of close friends here, I had to be careful what I said to them....I really don't want to be here, I hate being here, I couldn't voice that for fear of offending or losing them.

(DJF-10)

4. There is a period of transition, change and shock which can take years of readjustment.

4.1 Each participant had to conquer culture shock.

Common themes causing culture shock in the host country are: food; customs; transport; schooling; discomfort; lack of trust. All the usual markers of familiarity are missing and there are some huge adjustments to make.

It was difficult trying to find a middle ground between really vastly different cultural existences

(ALM-4)

And there was an element of being English, a bit of hostility; I felt I had to be a little bit careful, a bit aware so that we didn't stick out.

(BTF-3)

There was a class system in that part of the world which was difficult for me....we were living and working in an environment of poor human rights, it was a real dilemma, we needed that culture for our living but

there was a lot I found very distasteful and uncomfortable and I think that ultimately lead us to repatriating.

(CKF-3)

You know the culture shock would sometimes be the food and I would have to travel quite a way, which was a shock, I hadn't appreciated how vast that country was.

(DJF-13)

4.2 Each participant had to come to terms with reverse culture shock.

Each participant struggled with reverse culture shock, particularly if they had not been able to prepare for their departure or were heavily involved in the culture of the host country.

I had forgotten the cultural pressure of Britain I guess, to be of worth you have to work and it's still really strong....it didn't feel like home, it all felt out of our control, we didn't have anything familiar... It was just shocking for both of us.

(ALM-10)

Being back here it's a very different mentality and the return was just too fast for me, I was used to it being a little more human, it felt so aggressive. There is a reserve here, very much more of wearing masks and I wonder if that is what I have always found quite shocking.

(BTF-9)

I found it so hard, unless you understand how can you get any help. I felt so alone and a foreigner in my home town...

(CKF-7)

I was very affected when I came back, very depressed, I didn't want to be here...It was like starting all over again, I wasn't right for probably 12 months and you don't realise at the time that is what's wrong with you....I was quite poorly, I would break down in tears, I felt I couldn't cope and I felt I had no reason to feel that.

(DJF-3)

I was so low, it was so sudden, it was so awful... real heart-wrenching, just terrible...it is a sense of grieving. I will never forget it, and the girls to see their mum so upset was terrible, trying to be strong and brave for them, I was in pieces, absolute bits, it was horrible.

(DJF-15)

4.3 Return involved a drop in standard of living and often resulted in financial issues.

Participants' move to home meant the lifestyle they had been leading was gone. Participants A and B stressed they did not live abroad as traditional "expats" but nevertheless enjoyed a nice way of life, all encountered financial difficulty on their return.

You have to think can I do the school run today or do we have to walk, finance is a big problem for me it has made me really sad and kind of

really struggle; whereas when I was in Thailand I didn't cook for myself and didn't do my own washing, it's ridiculous.

(ALM-11)

My life changed so completely that I couldn't actually afford to do anything....petrol in the car, you know I couldn't.

(BTF-12)

Financially it was very stressful, the time at home was dreadful, we were really scared and under tremendous stress.

(CKF-7)

The UK is a very expensive place to live and because I had followed my husband's career abroad and neglected my own that had a huge negative impact. I'm fending for myself now and I cannot demand the income that I would've done, I'm starting from rock bottom.

(DJF-16)

Summary of Results

The themes which emerged from the participants' interviews largely fall in line with existing research. All participants had struggled with who they were in moving cultures and developed a strong sense of reliance on their intuition; their inner locus of evaluation rather than the external influences which were constantly changing and therefore not reliable. The difficulty of putting down roots in order to have meaningful relationships was expressed and the deeper those roots had gone the harder it was to come "home".

All expressed shock at coming home, and that home was more defined by people than the place. Having a home to return to almost increased the pain and loss experienced as there was little understanding and sometimes even guilt, for the feelings of displacement. It became clear too that participants had mostly put the needs of others before themselves and had not recognised the toll of returning on themselves or had just felt they should be able to cope. There was a feeling of isolation and alienation, this may be transitory but most expressed a view of being different or at least having a different outlook from having lived abroad. The drop in standard of living had clearly had an impact on the participants and they had encountered substantial struggles. The impact on relationships is clear and each participant has suffered by living abroad with two ending up separated from their former partners.

The overall sense gained from the interviews is that participants recognised that going abroad presented them with some very complex issues which they had not appreciated at the outset and the impact was huge.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The research centred on the experiences and feelings of returnees. It soon became clear that even though participants had all returned over five years ago they were still dealing with issues caused by re-entry. Emotions had been pushed to one side in order to get on with life and space had not been created for them to grieve yet the losses they suffered were huge.

The participants in this research answered questions from a semi-structured interview (Appendix7, p. 93) about their perception of living abroad and returning to live in their home country. A number of themes emerged from their narratives surrounding identity, attachment, isolation and loss, which largely fits in with the previously examined literature base. During this research I was particularly looking for findings demonstrating the impact on relationships of having lived abroad. Each of the four participants have been profoundly affected by their experience and each acknowledged an impact on their way of interacting today. The structure of the discussion follows the order of the propositions in Chapter Four.

Each participant commented that they had to rely on their inner sense of being; the literature explains this by stating how culture is inextricably linked with one's sense of identity. Culture is seen as necessary to shape identity (Erikson, 1953; Heibert, 1983; Kohls, 1984). There is a need to redefine identity with each move and participants held on to who they were despite all the changes and differing values around them. This becomes a part of their way of being (Knell, 2006; Pusch, 1988). Three out of four participants drew

comfort and guidance from religion, three different faiths (Buddhism, Christianity and Islam); the comfort is provided by the belief itself regardless of type. The faith supports their sense of well-being (Davis et al, 2010; Schubert, 1984).

Each participant fitted into Pollock and Reken's (2001) relational pattern to surrounding culture and fell into the hidden immigrant category, struggling as a result of this. Whilst abroad they may well have looked or spoken differently and therefore clearly stood out as foreigners but once they are home they are expected to fit into the mirror category of looking and thinking alike to others but it seems after a stay abroad it is very hard to fall back into this category and they become hidden immigrants, losing any sympathy or understanding they may receive as true immigrants (Pascoe, 2000; Pollock and Reken, 2001; Schubert, 1984; Schuetz, 1945).

Each participant used emotive terminology to describe their struggle and frustration at their loss of status on return to home; there was no recognition for the skills acquired abroad, whether this is the ability to speak several languages fluently and thus be able to identify with another culture, getting below the tip of the iceberg (Kohls, 1984) or just be able to negotiate another culture and understand their ways. Three out of four mentioned the actual lack of being valued they felt on return. There is a feeling of being seen as stupid or ignorant due to the lack of "cultural" knowledge during the years of their absence. The literature acknowledges the struggle of returnees to feel valued, that skills acquired abroad are not valued in the home country (Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2000; Pusch, 1988; Sand-Hart, 2010; Storti, 2001).

Participants struggle with roots, on the one hand there is a desire to be rooted yet also a struggle to put roots down too firmly as the pain of pulling them out is not an experience they are keen to repeat. Expatriates are described as nomads in the literature (McCaig, 1992; Pascoe, 2006; Sichel, 2004), yet this only fits in the sense that they have no permanent home, nomads have a secure base in their community where expatriates do not. Participants describe a lack of feeling settled and one participant described how painful moving home was in terms of ripping out roots to the extent that she became ill. Milosz (1980) and Lewis and Jungman(1986) state that people do not cope well with uprootedness and work to reroot as soon as possible in order to belong. Uprooting is compared to bereavement by some (Cox, 2000; Harris, 2011; Zwingman&Pfister-Amende, 1973). There is a conflict in the literature here as some researchers claim expatriates are only capable of putting out shallow roots (Eidse and Sichel,2004; Macgregor Wise, 2000; Sand-Hart, 2010).This conflict is borne out by the participants too, as two describe shallow roots and being able to move quite easily as it was the people who were central for them and not the place (ALM, CKF); where two experienced deeper rootedness, a great deal of pain at uprooting and expressed a greater need to belong and be part of the community (BTF, DJF).

Each participant describes the struggle of returning to their home, feelings of it not being right or comfortable, needing time, feeling unsettled, to not wanting to be there and acknowledging there is no such thing as going home, wondering if you can ever come back. These feelings are reinforced in the literature that home is no longer accessible as it was, the familiarity and warmth has gone; it has been idealised and can only possibly be a

disappointment, and there is no such thing as going home (Pascoe, 2000; Schuetz, 1945; Storti, 2001; Useem and Cottrell, 1996).

The pain of losing friendships was clearly expressed by the participants, each one described loss and pain in detail, their anguish was tangible. The literature focusses here on the effect this may have, expatriates learn that friendships are not lasting and therefore close down a receptive part of themselves to prevent further pain (Pascoe, 2000; Pollock and Reken, 2001; Sand-Hart, 2010). This can have serious long-term consequences in terms of commitment for the future (Bowlby, 1973; Eidse and Sichel, 2004; Harwood, Miller and Irizarry, 1995).

There has been a definite impact for the participants on their intimate relationships, although each had different experiences surrounding their return, the knock on effect to their relationships was clearly evident in that two broke down altogether and two suffered tremendous stress maintaining their relationship. The differing needs of the couple became marked on return. The literature focusses on the difficulties in maintaining relationships (MacGregor Wise, 2000; Pascoe, 2006; Storti, 2001) but less on the incidence of breakdown. Participants described drifting apart and a loss of common ground; especially where one partner has seen the need to return for the sake of the children and the other has not considered the same view point.

Participants all returned to areas which were familiar to them, they had grown up there or had family to help with resettlement. This tended to be double edged as there were expectations from family to be “happy” to be home and a lack of understanding of the returnees’ predicament or sadness (Storti, 2001;

Weaver, 1987); as well as a certain expectation to help them out now, rather than acknowledging the difficulties facing the returnee, which often resulted in feelings of anger and guilt in the participants (Knell, 2006, Pascoe, 2006; Pollock and Reken, 2001).

A theme not of central focus in the literature but an area of major concern for all four participants was their commitment and sense of duty to their children. All felt obliged to return home for the sake of giving their children stability and consistency in educational terms. The research covers the character and attributes of typical third culture kids (Pascoe, 2000; Pollock and Reken, 2001; Useem, 1993), but does not appear to focus on the parent's sacrifice in returning for the perceived benefit of the child. It would be interesting here if the children had been interviewed to see if the views matched. The participants carried the responsibility for the resettlement of their children and continued to provide that constancy after one partner remained abroad, one went abroad again and one left. This compromised their own freedom of movement and career potential and they express this openly. It was not necessarily their "choice" to return and hence the struggle to resettle is greater.

A conflict resulted in their openness and willingness to see the world from new perspectives but their perspective did not necessarily fit in with the viewpoints back at home. Each participant had spent over two years abroad and research states that this is enough time for cultural assimilation to begin and therefore to make returning to the home country more problematic. The literature comments on the struggle for returnees, beliefs and values have

changed whilst abroad and now on return there is a reaction against the status quo (Schuetz, 1945; Storti, 2011; Sue, 1978).

Participants were vocal and emotional in their description of the loss and pain they felt on return; they felt there was nowhere to voice their grief and it was often buried or hidden. There was an assumption that they would be happy to be home and there was a certain amount of guilt in voicing anything other than that due to the privileged life lead so far and the need they felt to appreciate those around them, particularly family, for fear of alienating themselves if they did not. All describe hurt, loss, pain, grief and sadness. There is no recognition for the bereavement they live through as the loss cannot be quantified. This is acknowledged in the literature; the loss is not just about people but the lifestyle and the way of being (Bennett, 1977; Davis et al, 2010; Harris, 2011; Knell, 2006; Ledman, 2001; Pascoe, 2000).

All participants experienced feelings of isolation and alienation on their return. This was partly a need to protect them from further hurt and partly because going abroad had irreversibly changed them and they no longer knew quite how to fit back in to a community which was no longer familiar to them. All described feeling alone and cut off. The literature supports this and points to the fact that returnees are isolated and that this is a dangerous place for them to be, unchecked it can lead to severe depression (Dolan, 1994; Knell, 2006; Pascoe, 2006).

For each of the participants their experience of reverse culture shock was more traumatic and more of a struggle than the culture shock itself. There was shock in going abroad particularly where the culture was very different but it

was not as “surprising” or “shocking” to them as the difficulty to settle on their return seemed to be. Participants experienced feelings of worthlessness, being out of control, confusion, sadness, humiliation, depression, fear, doubt, illness, inability to cope; loss and grieving. It was an uncomfortable and deeply upsetting time for them. For many even though the return was several years ago, recalling how they felt at that time was moving and was the first time they had visited such strong emotions regarding the topic. There had been no space at the time to air their feelings. The literature does support these feelings as being normal adding anger too which did not come to the forefront with the participants until the topic of financial issues was discussed (Dolan, 1994; Gaw, 2000).

Each participant suffered a loss in their standard of living by their return and was shocked at the lack of recognition of their skills acquired abroad. Some struggled at the contrast between their lives abroad to now. They recognised that the move abroad had cost them a good career at home and left them behind their peers. The literature recognises that skills acquired abroad are not valued and also acknowledges the difficulties in coping with the loss in standard of living and facing the financial struggles which carry the added complication of feelings of shame and embarrassment after living a luxurious lifestyle (Boley, 1986; Brislin, 1981; Naipaul, 1987).

Some of the feelings described above may be seen as temporary and as part of the transition phase of returnees yet the feelings conveyed were still very raw and passionate; participants were still living with the pain and had not yet put it behind them and been able to move on. They described feeling utterly alone with their grief and sadness and felt a need to suppress their feelings

for the sake of others: children; family, surrounding friends. There is no permission to grieve due to the awareness of having lead a privileged life so the individual begins to wear a mask to cover their feelings (Pollock and Reken, 2001).

To expand this research I would like to be able to interview the children of the participants as this would give a more rounded view and reveal if their perceptions were similar to those of their parent. Each participant was compromised by having to take their children into account when making serious decisions about their futures and this was not highlighted in the literature found. It was coincidence that each of my participants had children and I had not realised on selection that this may colour or influence the research. I think further studies could focus on adults without children to see if their experience of returning was similar or had an impact on their relationships, sense of being valued and careers. Equally the impact on relationships could be explored further to see if there may be a correlation between living abroad and a breakdown in relationships. Half of my participants had broken up with their partners as a result of living abroad. I appreciate that this sample is not large enough to consider this as any more than coincidence but further research could reach a larger sample group by means of questionnaires focussing on relationships more directly.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the impact on relationships and families of having lived abroad but in fact the focus centres more around the individual and how profoundly lonely their experience was. Their main area of concern was for others, their families, either partners or children, and I wonder if this was because my participants were counsellors who may have the feature of putting others before themselves as an inherent characteristic of their nature. Each participant had been home for more than five years and I wonder what differences would have come to light to interview after a shorter period of time.

It is important to gain a wider perspective on this issue, especially as counsellors work in such private environments, they are limited in their experience of new issues and it is by increasing research and reading new research that counsellors are able to broaden their horizons and become aware of concerns they may not yet have come across but may well be faced with at some point in the future. Counselling is needed for returnees to help revisit the past and work through the feelings of loneliness and displacement. Ideally this would be someone with an overseas perspective. There needs to be an understanding of the unresolved grief and hidden losses. These include so many: loss of their world; loss of status; loss of lifestyle; loss of possessions; loss of relationships; loss of role model; loss of the past (Davis et al 2010; Ledman, 2001). Counselling can help, not to recover the loss, but to recognise and validate the past losses, to raise awareness over behaviour, to name the hurt and thus free the person to look to the future (Harris, 2011).

There is a feeling of struggle for recognition or validation so there is a high tendency to go abroad again, it is what is familiar and where fitting in is not an issue (Harris, 2011; Pascoe, 2006; Pollock and Reken, 2001; Sand-Hart, 2010).

This particular research may seem to be targeting a relatively small group of people, ones who have lived abroad for a period of time but as the literature highlights, they have become the forerunners of cultural awareness and have the ability to live easily in a multi-cultural world (Ward, 2004). This situation presents itself ever more frequently for every citizen in today's world and expatriates' knowledge could be used and channelled to increase understanding and awareness. So far this energy remains undervalued as there is still a suspicion surrounding returnees. The view from home still tends to be:

They would certainly be interested and they would question us, but when we replied, they would be seeing it all from such a different point of view, that the undertaking as we viewed it, would be incomprehensible to them (Cable and French, 1947, p.287).

Many expatriates have experience in operating harmoniously within a multi-cultural society and therefore their skills could be channelled and used in a positive way to help others and indeed to provide them with some value to having lived abroad thus reducing the negativity they experience.

Counselling is still a relatively new profession and therefore innovations in theory and technique are ever evolving (McLeod, 2008). It is hoped that this research will aid a counsellor's understanding of the returnees' predicament. Essentially all experiences are subjective and as quoted earlier we see things

as we are and not necessarily as they are but if this work does help to shed some light onto the predicament of returnees then it is useful for that alone. The returnee may have the confidence to be who they truly are and not hide away the person they became whilst abroad but learn how to incorporate this into their being and move forward in a positive way:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from.

(Eliot, 1943: V)

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Search Strategy- Databases and Search Terms

Search Strategy

The literature search focused primarily upon books and journals. The electronic databases provided by the University of Chester were utilised as well as the University library and personal book collections. Some websites set up to help and support expatriates were accessed. Journals were accessed mainly via the EBSCO host database including:

- EDUCATION RESEARCH COMPLETE
- PSYCINFO,
- PSYCARTICLES
- SOCINDEX
- PROQUEST

Search Terms:

- Culture
- Culture shock
- Reverse culture shock
- Re-entry issues
- Repatriation
- Transition
- Change

- (adult) Third Culture Kids
- Global nomads
- Roots
- Rootlessness
- Identity
- Home
- Unresolved grief
- Loss
- Attachment
- Stress
- Counselling

Advert produced and sent to various agencies and universities to attract participants

Counsellors in training who have lived abroad

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

I am a 3rd year MA student at Chester University and am looking for participants to take part in my research who have lived overseas, not as the main wage earner, for at least 2 years.

If you would like to talk to me about your experience since returning to the UK I would be very grateful for your time and would like to involve you in my study.

Participation will include an hour long interview to explore your feelings since coming home.

Thank you.



Information sheet emailed to each interested participant prior to any commitment on their behalf:



The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

Research Information Sheet

Title of dissertation: The Impact on Families and Relationships of having lived abroad.

About me: I am a third year post graduate student at Chester University studying for an MA in Clinical Counselling. I lived in Asia for 9 years and found the experience of repatriation a difficult one.

My Research: There is a lot of support available for people considering a move abroad, both through companies and general literature around explaining the effects of culture shock. The return to the home country does not seem as well supported, particularly for the trailing spouse. I aim to focus my attention on the difficulties experienced by trailing spouses of returning back to the UK after having lived a number of years overseas. I aim to look at the impact on intimate relationships with family and others and also to examining what resettlement issues occurred.

How will participants be selected?

I am looking for participants who are training or already qualified as counsellors, who have lived abroad at some point in their lives for a constant period of at least 2 years and who were not the main employee/wage earner. Having lived abroad and attended school abroad is fine or being the trailing spouse, looking after a family whilst the partner went to work.

What does participating in this research mean?

If you choose to put yourself forward to participate and you meet the inclusion criteria your involvement will be an hour long audio-recorded interview which will offer the opportunity to explore your experience. The interview will be held at a mutually convenient, safe and confidential location. After the interview, I will transcribe the audio-recording and this will become my data. I will send you a copy of the transcript for you to check for accuracy and your data will be analysed using the constant comparative method and will then be compared to the data of other participants to identify themes. You may remove or amend any details you are not happy to have published.

What are the potential risks?

There is a risk that exploring this topic may bring up unexpected feelings for you. If this were the case, I would hope that you might be able to use the

support of your personal counsellor to understand what this means for you. I will ensure that you are able to access the list of BACP registered counsellors should you wish to do so.

If at any point, up until the point of publication, you wished to withdraw from the study, you have the right to do so with no consequences to yourself or your studies.

What are the potential benefits of the research?

It is my hope and intention that through carrying out this research it will result in an increased awareness for counsellors working with expatriates and they will have access to an indepth study of the difficulties of resettlement

Confidentiality Throughout the research and writing up of my dissertation I will ensure that your anonymity is protected by allocating a code to all information relating to your involvement in the project. Any information which may identify you will not be included in the project. With your consent, verbatim sections of the interview may be used in the final dissertation.

How will the data be protected?

My data will consist of the audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews with my research participants. The interviews will be recorded onto a digital recorder which will be kept securely when not in use. Recordings will be transferred onto my PC and their file will be password protected. Files will be saved under a code so that individuals may not be recognised from the file name. These codes will be used throughout the research to protect the participants' anonymity. A back up copy of the files will be held on a usb which will be kept in a secure location. All copies of the audio recordings will be deleted after the dissertation has been successfully completed. My electronic copies of the transcriptions will also be deleted at that time; however a hard copy of the data will be kept for 5 years in line with the University regulations. All data, whether in an electronic or hard copy format will be deleted in a way which preserves its confidentiality. For example hard copies of transcripts will be shredded and digital files erased so that they cannot be retrieved.

What will happen to the results?

The results of my research will form part of my MA dissertation which will be submitted to Chester University who will keep a copy. The dissertation may also be available electronically and the results may also form part of other works which are put forward for publication.

Ethics: It is my intention to conduct my research in line with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy's Code of Practice and Ethical Guidelines and the University's Research Governance Handbook in order to protect my participants from harm and loss and to enhance the trustworthiness of my study. I have also submitted my research proposal to the University's Ethics Committee and have gained their approval to undertake this project. I am aware that ethical issues are not resolved in the planning stages but need to be kept in focus throughout; therefore I intend to work with my supervisor to look at ethical issues for the duration of the project. My research conduct will be monitored through regular consultation

with my academic supervisor. Should there be any complaints or adverse events, I will discuss these immediately to avoid any harm to anyone involved in the project. Formal complaints about the research should be made to the Programme leader.

Inclusion criteria used to determine suitability of participants:

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

Questions for Inclusion Criteria

Please mark 'x' as appropriate:

- a) Male ☐ Female ☐
- b) Age Group: 25-35 ☐ 36-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 65+ ☐
- c) Children? Yes ☐ No ☐
1. How long have you lived abroad for?
 <2 years ☐ 2-5 years ☐ 5+ years ☐
2. Were you the main wage earner?
 Yes ☐ No ☐
3. Did you work whilst abroad?
 Yes ☐ No ☐
4. When did you return to the UK?
 <2 years ago ☐ 2-5 years ago ☐ 5+ years ago ☐

Please could you give me brief answers to the following questions:

5. Why did you move abroad?

6. Why did you return to the UK?

Consent Forms signed by each participant

University of
Chester

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

**Title of
Study:**.....

**Name of
Researcher:**.....

**Name of
Participant:**.....

**If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent
form below.**

Please

Initial

Box

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself.
3. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded.
4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.
5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers.

I agree to take part in the above project

.....	
.....		
Name of participant	Date	Signature

.....	
.....		
Name of Person taking Consent	Date	Signature

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived
Abroad



M. A. in Clinical Counselling Research
University of Chester

Consent Form: Audio/Digital Recording of Interview

Title of
Study:.....

.....

Ihereby give consent for the details of a written transcript based on an audio/digital recorded interview with me and..... .. to be used in preparation and as part of a research dissertation for the M.A. in Clinical Counselling at the University of Chester. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous and that all personally identifiable information will remain confidential and separate from the research data. I further understand that the transcript may be seen by Counselling Tutors and the External Examiner for the purpose of assessment and moderation. I also understand that all these individuals are bound by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

I understand that I will have access to the transcribed material and would be able to delete or amend any part of it. I am aware that I can stop the interview at any time or ultimately withdraw the interview, without giving a reason or explanation, at any point before the submission of the dissertation. Upon satisfactory completion of the M.A. in Clinical Counselling the recording will be securely destroyed. The transcripts and related data will be securely stored for a period of five years, by me, the researcher, and then destroyed.

Excerpts from the transcript will be included in the dissertation. A copy of the dissertation will be held in the Department of Social Studies and Counselling and may be made available electronically through Chester Rep, the University's online research repository.

Without my further consent some of the material may be used for publication and/or presentations at conferences and seminars. Every effort will be made to ensure complete anonymity.

Finally I confirm I have read and understood the attached Information Sheet and was given the opportunity for further explanation by the researcher. I believe I have been given sufficient information about the nature of this research, including any possible risks, to give my informed consent to participate.

Signed
[Participant].....
.....

Name-.....
Print...... **Please**

Date
.....

Signed..... **[Researcher]**
.....

Name..... **Please**
Print......

Date......
...

Interview Guide used during interviews

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived



Abroad

Interview Questions for interviewer

This is intended as an aide-memoire and not as a script. It is my intention to allow the interview to develop in the direction that the research participant leads whilst being mindful of the subject matter and the fact that there are questions that I would like answered

Introduction: Thank you for coming – I would like us to spend the next hour exploring your experience of having lived abroad and the impact that may have had on you, your family and relationships with others. I have some questions – there are no right or wrong answers and I am happy to allow the interview to develop to get the best understanding of your experience.

(Ensure consent form is signed)

Do you have any questions about the process before we start?

Questions:

1. How long were you abroad for and where have you lived?

(How much notice were you given of your return to the UK?

Did you feel you had any control over this decision?)

2. Did you give up a career to move abroad? Were you able to work whilst away? (Did this cause you any concern?)
3. How much interaction did you have with the local culture and people? (What would you say were the main cultural differences you experienced?)
4. How would you describe your experience of returning to the UK?
5. How long do you feel it took you to feel really “at home” again?

(Did you return to the same house/area you left behind? How were you received? What difficulties did you encounter on your return? Are there any specific instances which come to mind?)

6. What impact do you feel the whole experience has had on you as a person? (Have you noticed anything about the way you or your children form intimate relationships?) What do you miss about your life abroad? (Weather, friends, social interaction, lifestyle)
7. "There is no such thing as going home. There is only an illusion-a mirage in the desert" (R.Pascoe) Do you feel you identify with this statement?
8. Did you have any support in re settling? Can you identify what could have helped?

(Books, support groups, counsellors, web sites)

9. Overall if the same opportunity presented itself again would you take it?

(Bearing in mind gains and losses involved both 18/06/2013 Tuesday, 18 June 2013 ways, leaving and resettling)

10. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Closing: Thank you for your participation. I will now be transcribing the recording of this session so long as you are still happy for me to do that? I will then send you a copy of the transcription for you to check for accuracy. Once you have checked it I will begin my analysis and then compare it to the analysis of other data. Your anonymity will be maintained throughout.

Appendix 7

Interview questions sent to participants prior to interview:



University of
Chester

The Impact on Families and Relationships of Having Lived Abroad

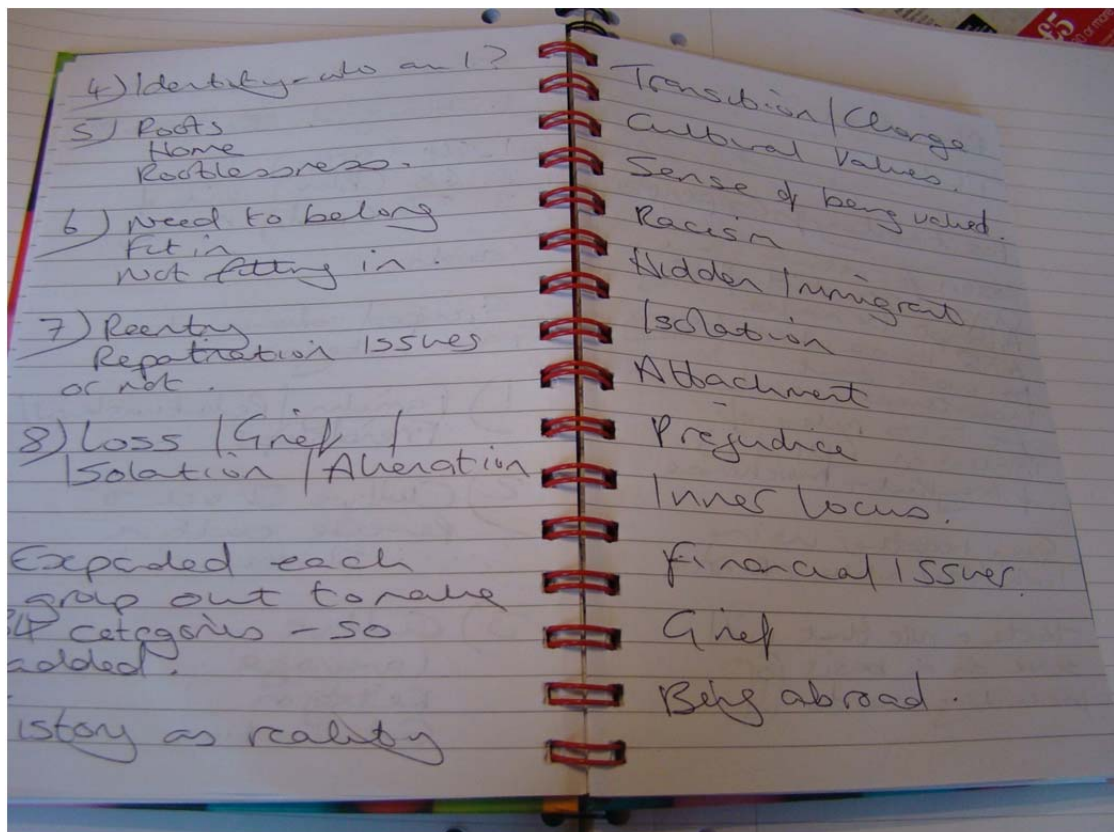
Interview Questions for Participants

Questions:

1. How long were you abroad for and where have you lived?
2. Did you give up a career to move abroad? Were you able to work whilst away?
3. How much interaction did you have with the local culture and people?
4. How would you describe your experience of returning to the UK?
5. How long do you feel it took you to feel really “at home” again?
6. What impact do you feel the whole experience has had on you as a person? What do you miss about your life abroad?
7. “There is no such thing as going home. There is only an illusion-a mirage in the desert” (R.Pascoe) Do you feel you can identify with this statement?
8. Did you have any support in re settling? Can you identify what could have helped?
9. Overall if the same opportunity presented itself again would you take it?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

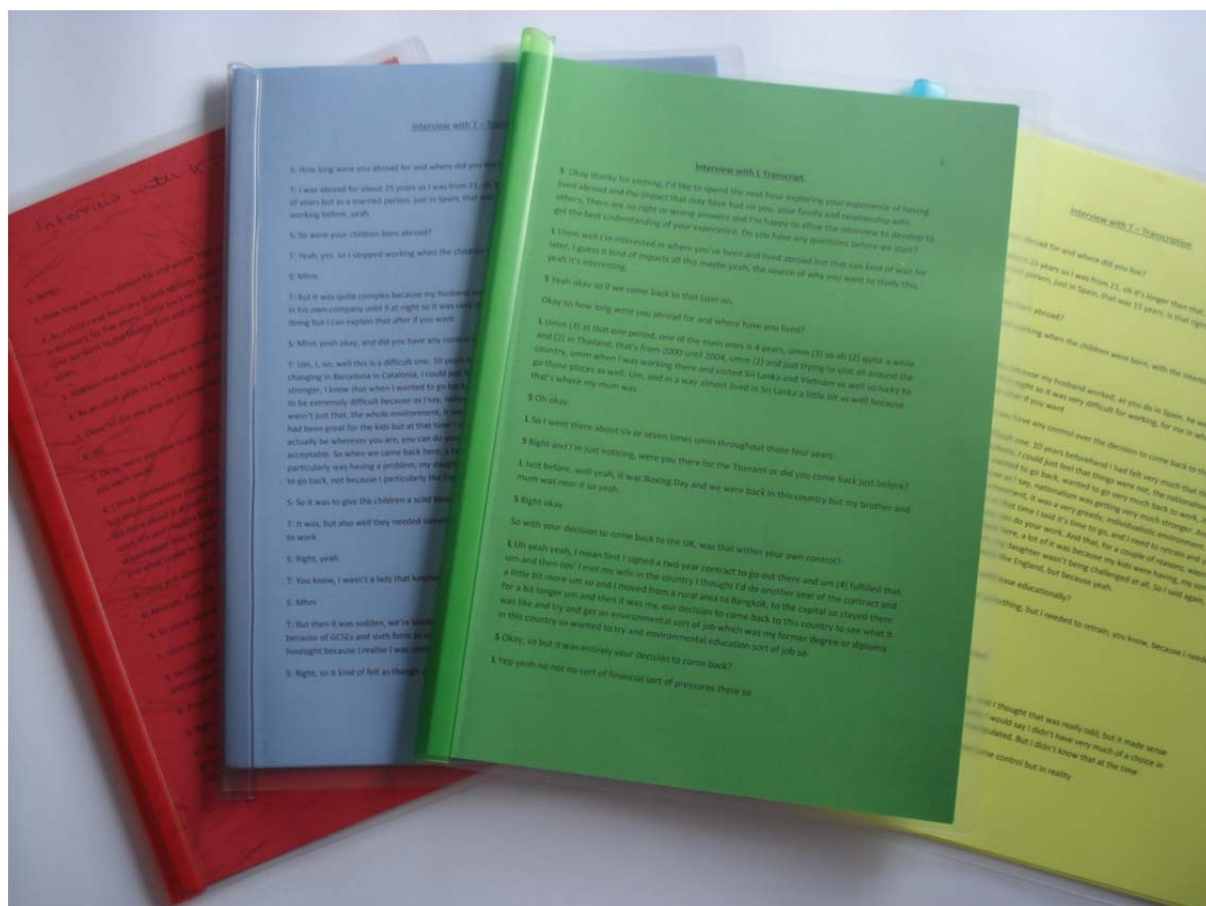
Appendix 8

Journal pages showing emergent themes:



Appendix 9

Four Participants' Transcripts – colour coded for ease of identification



Appendix 10

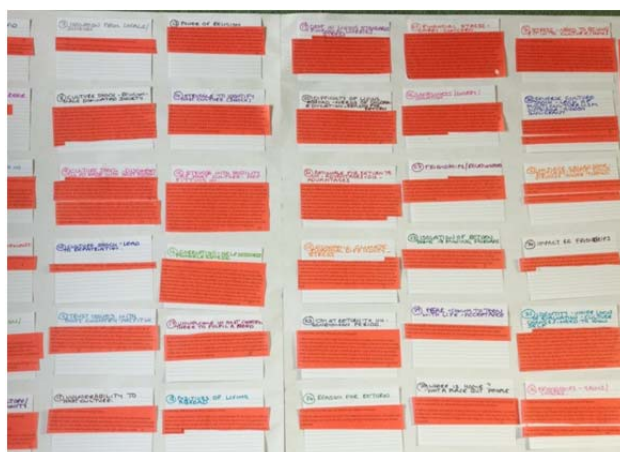
Units of Data for Each Participant



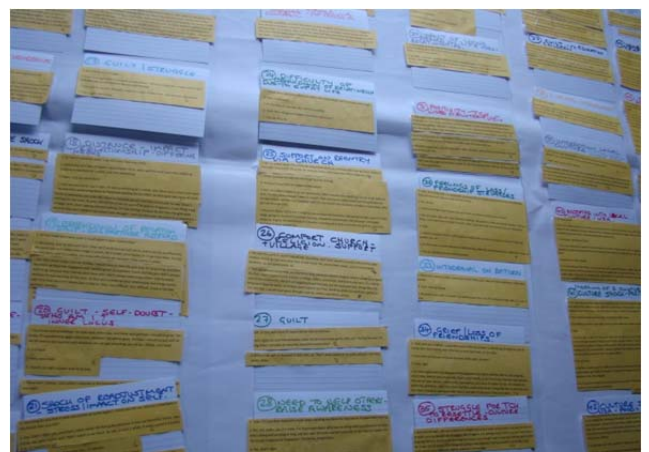
ALM



BTF



CKF

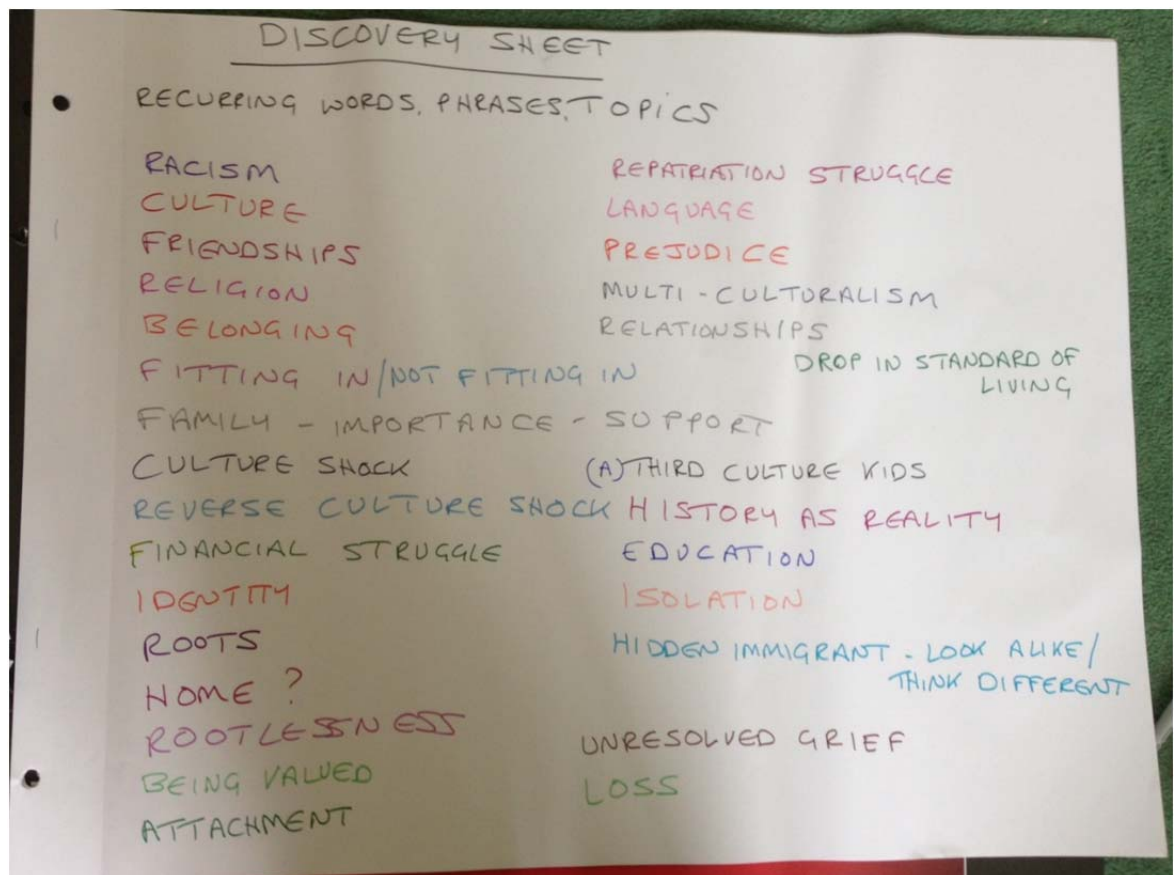


DJF

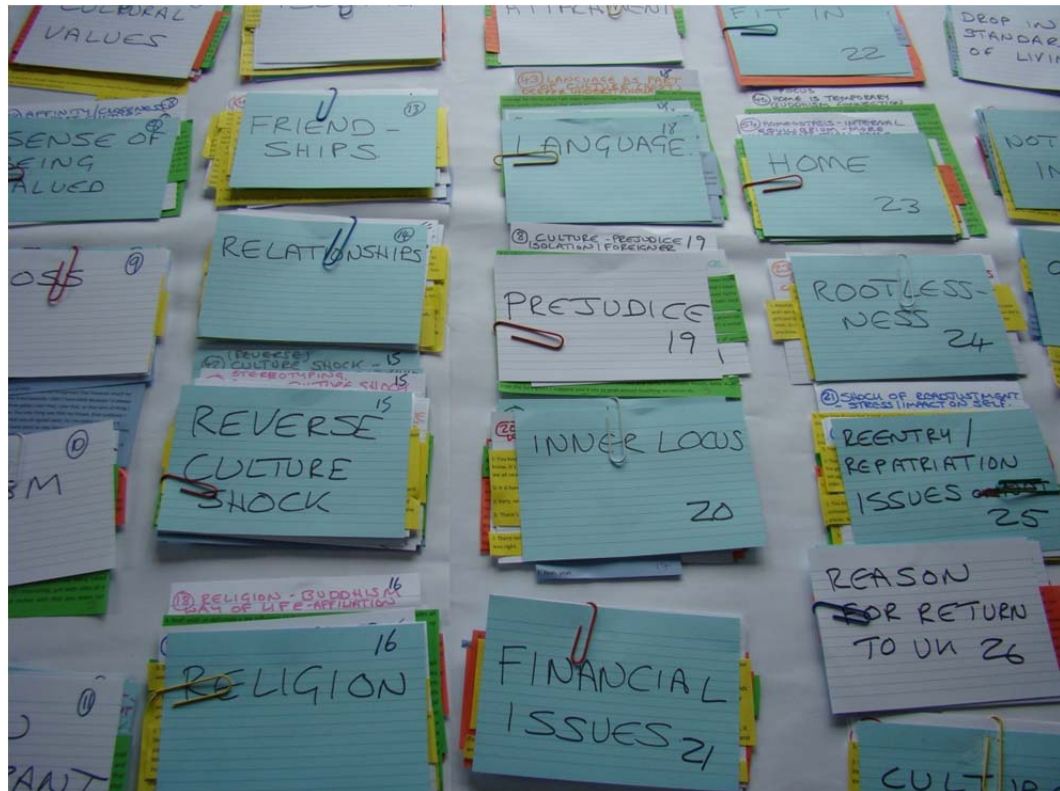
Initial Categories



Discovery Sheet



Refinement of Categories- similar meanings grouped together



Rules for Inclusion



Appendix 14

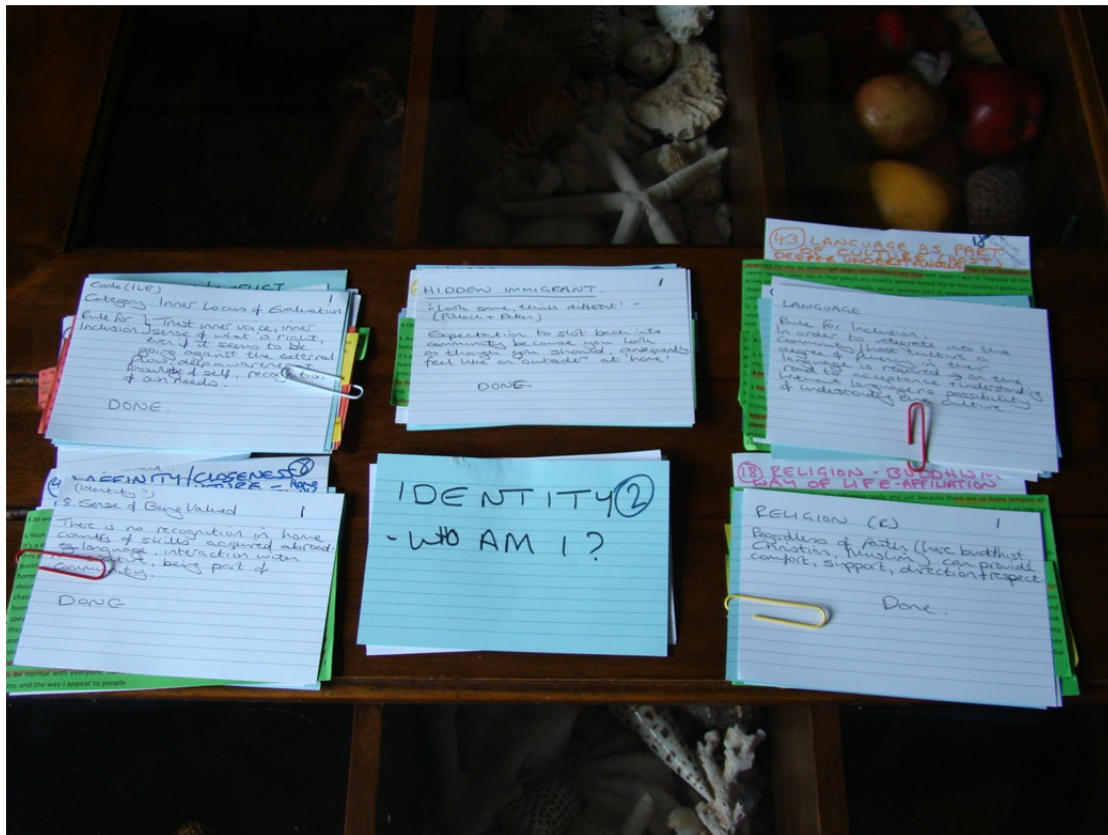
Integration of Data, according to rules for inclusion



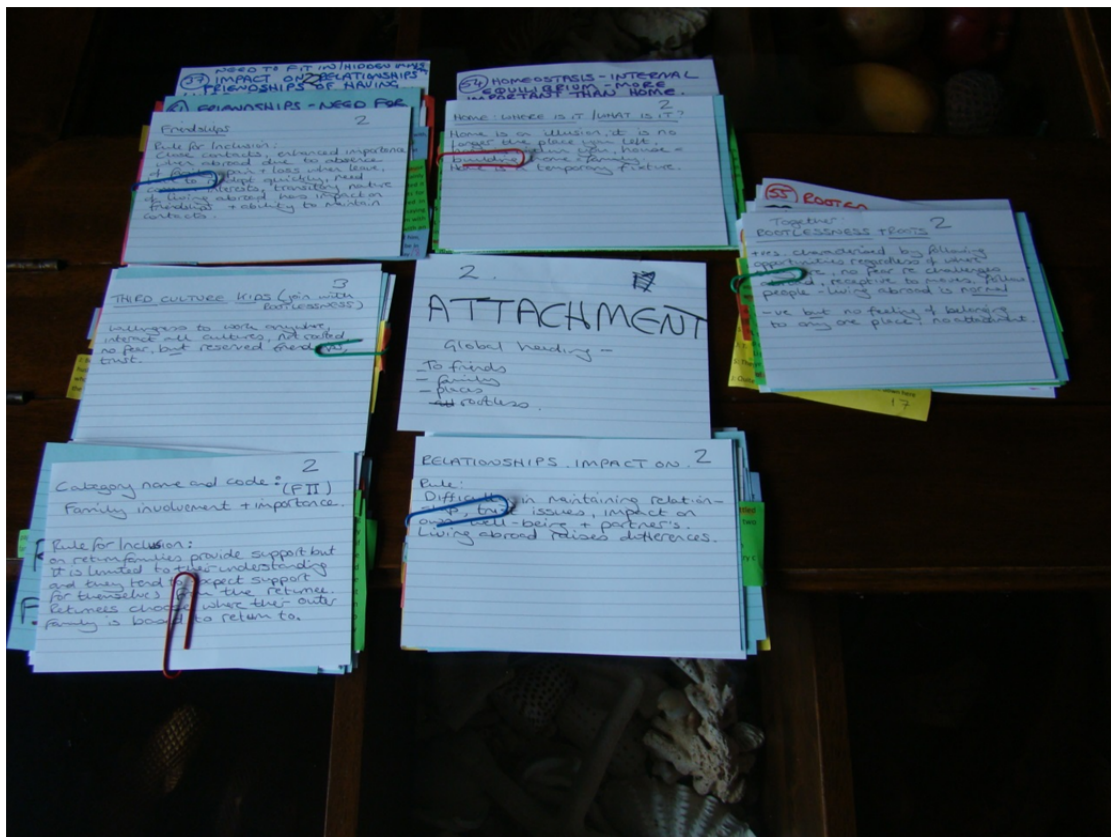
Miscellaneous – Cards which did not fit in to any proposition or sub-proposition



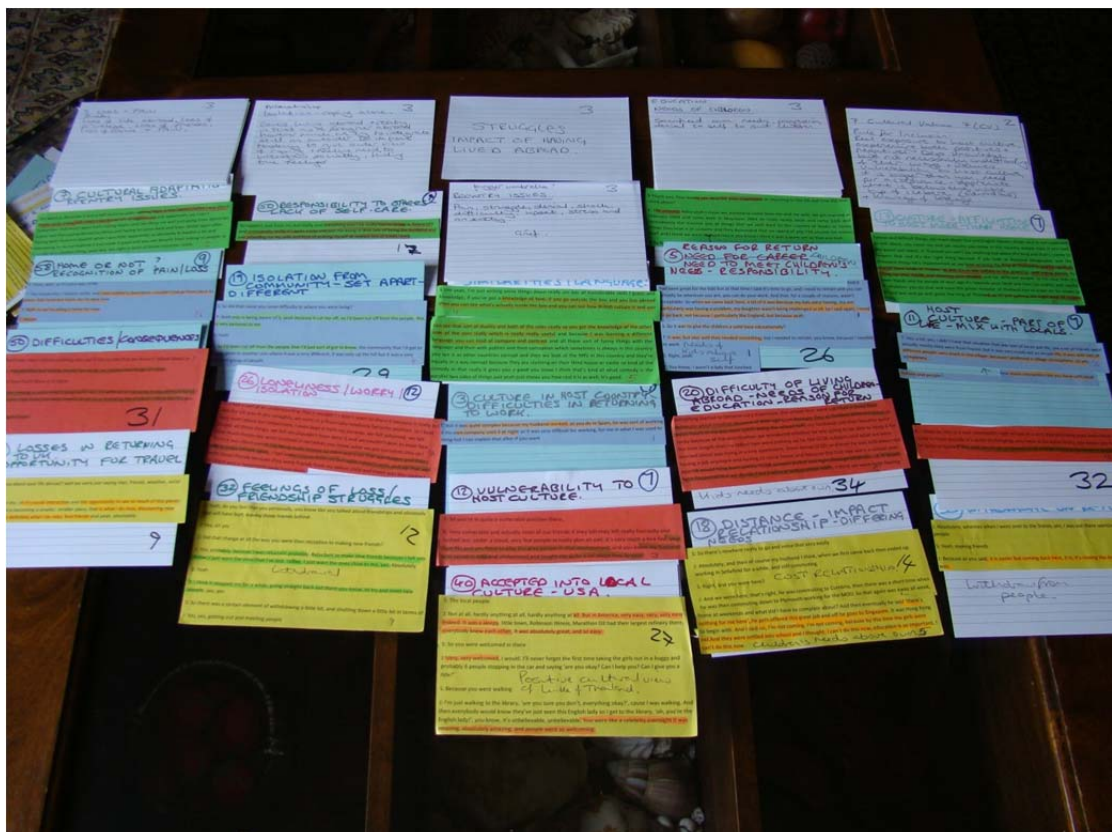
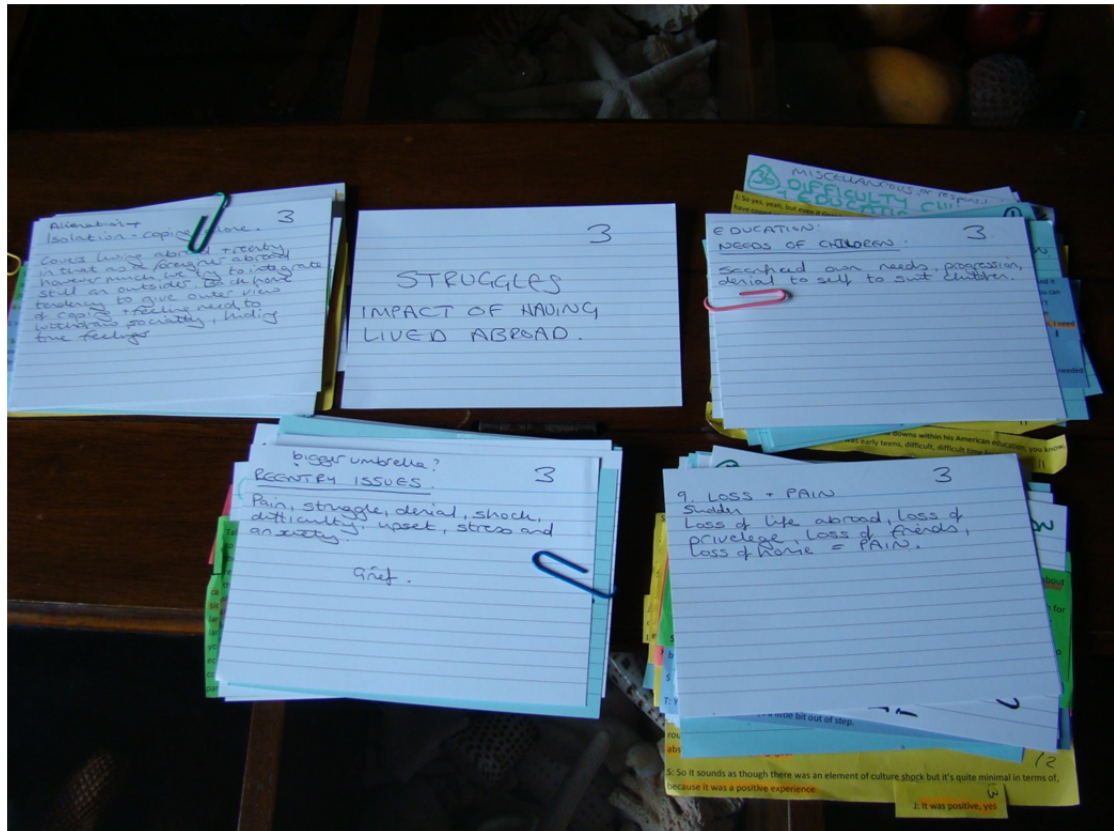
Proposition 1: Living Abroad has an Impact on Identity



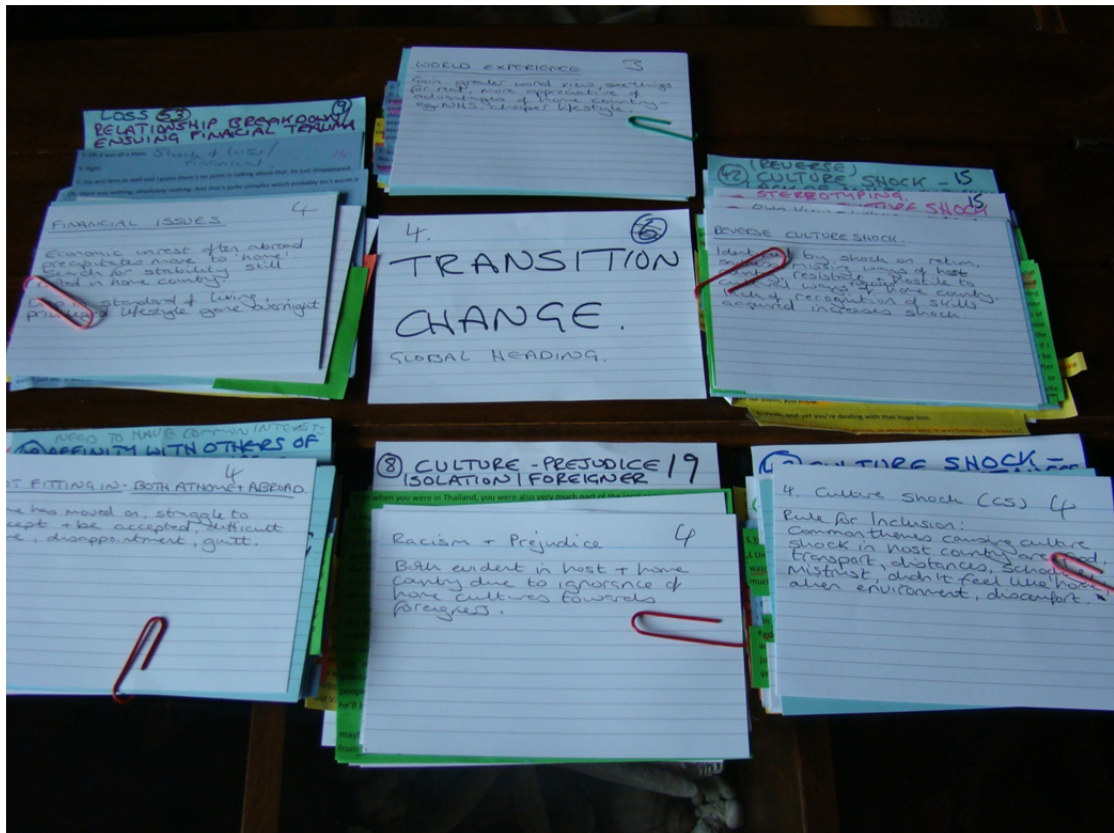
Proposition 2: Participants Experienced the Impact of Attachment and Detachment



Proposition 3: Participants Struggle to Resettle in Their Home Country for a Number of Reasons



Proposition 4: There is a Period of Transition, Change and Shock Which Can Take Years of Readjustment



Rules for Inclusion: the initial stages

1. Family- provides support in a limited way as their understanding of the experience is not there but there is support in terms of returning to a family base/home, expectation is there from family to help them out too.
2. Identity-who am I? There is an inner need to label self, know who you truly are and recognise what is needed to move forward.
3. Inner Locus of Evaluation – There is an inner voice/sense of what is right even if it seems to be going against the external flow, there is a recognition of own needs.
4. Roots- there is a need to put down roots wherever in the world you are, there is a search for meaning to being there and people become more significant than places.
5. Culture Shock- Food, distances, schooling, transport, a feeling of discomfort, didn't feel like home, mistrust and an alien environment all made up culture shock.
6. Cultural Values: exposure to other cultures, both positive and negative experiences, a deep knowledge but not necessarily absolute understanding of host's ways, different values and acceptance of host's ways.
7. Need to be valued: there was no recognition in home country of skills and talents acquired abroad, ability to speak several languages and interact on a cultural level no longer matter in the home country.

8. Loss and Pain: loss of life abroad, lifestyle, loss of friends, loss of home.
9. Isolation: Whether at home or abroad the experience set them apart, still a foreigner abroad no matter how well integrated and on re-entry there is a need to withdraw, hiding true feelings
10. Religion: regardless of the faith, religion can provide comfort and support, focus and respect.
11. Friendships: There is a close bond with friends abroad, huge pain of loss of those people on return, hesitancy to form close bonds as quickly again.
12. Hidden Immigrant- look the same but think differently, expectation is there to slot back into the community because you look the same yet you feel like an outsider at home.
13. Relationships: hard to maintain as living abroad brings out differences , severe impact on well being and trust.
14. Financial issues: Privileged lifestyle is gone overnight, there is no career to slot back into, you have to start from the bottom
15. Culture: the willingness to embrace and understand the host's ways result in a more open and receptive outlook on life and other cultures.
16. Rootlessness : this is characterised by a willingness to take on opportunities offered all over the world, living abroad has been normalised, there is no fear but also no feeling of belonging to any one place.
17. Fitting in/belonging : feeling at home is difficult because you cannot fit back in where you left off, friends see you as different but there is a

need to belong and be a part of the community so adjustments are made to fit in.

18. Where/What is home? Home is an illusion, it is no longer where you left it, roots and feelings are elsewhere, the house is just a building, shallow and hollow, people make the home.

19. Reentry issues: denial, struggle, difficulty, pain of not wanting to be there, stress and anxiety and disappointment are apparent.

20. Impact of having lived abroad: loss of career, loss of control over future, loss of independence, change of entire life path.

21. Grief: Unresolved, no space to grieve, can result in physical illness, sadness, depression

22. Needs of children: participants gave up their own desires to meet needs for their children, education had an impact on ability to stay abroad or move, gave stress and undue responsibility to parent.

23. Reverse Culture Shock: often little preparation for return, feelings of shock, sadness, longing, displacement, resistance to home country's ways and values.

24. World experience: there is a bigger world view, a reality to history, an ability to see a much bigger multi-cultural view.

Appendix 20

How the Outcome Propositions Developed

1. **Identity** – we define who we are from what we learn from those around us as well as developing an inner sense, in an ever changing world it is hard to maintain a stable sense of self as the rules keep changing so it is vital to have a strong inner belief/locus.

I decided the following categories fitted into this proposition:

Inner Locus of Evaluation –

Being a Hidden Immigrant in the home country

Religion

Sense of being valued

2. **Attachment-** participants experienced the impact of detachment and attachment either in them or in their children. In order to make sense of the environment and to make meaningful relationships, it is necessary to put down some kind of roots.

The following categories fitted into this proposition:

Culture and third culture kids

Roots and rootlessness

Home- where and what is it?

Family involvement

Impact of friends and relationships

3. **The Struggle and Impact of having lived abroad-** there are short and long term impacts: This included the following categories:

Needs of children placed above personal needs especially education

Re-entry issues

Loss, pain, grief, reduces in time but never disappears

Alienation and isolation, always a bit out of step, wide world view costs

4. **Transition/Change/Stress-** there are transitions and change is everyday life but for ex-pat a larger than normal amount to deal with, huge impact for them.

In this proposition the following categories emerged:

Culture shock, racism and prejudice

Reverse culture shock

Financial issues/ drop in standard of living

The struggle and need to fit in, to belong